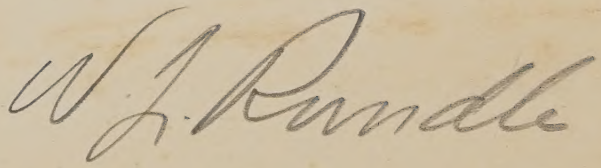
BACK DOOR GUEST

LENNOX KERR



BACK DOOR GUEST

BY LENNOX KERR

Decorations by
JAMES C. REID

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TO

MISS E. M. LAEDLEIN

This, "Jean," is the Moss

JOHNNY BROWN.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	*Why and How I Went to the United States*	11
II	*Advice to Immigrants, and a Few Observations on New York*	14
III	*New York City*	18
IV	*In Search of an Artist in Bohemia*	33
V	*I Arrive in America at Last, and Meet a Brother*	42
VI	*A Poet and an Author Enter a House of Mercy*	53
VII	*I Learn a New Business*	71
VIII	*From an Elevated Position*	94
IX	*A Sailor's Paradise*	103
X	*The Reader May Settle Again*	118
XI	*The Foolishness of It*	125
XII	*I Resume My Elevation—and Fall*	132
XIII	*Mary Gives Advice*	152
XIV	*The Art of Train-Jumping*	159
XV	*Why Is a Hobo?*	166
XVI	*The Madness of It*	181
XVII	*I Enter Professional Football*	191
XVIII	*A Line Defined and Its Application*	198
XIX	*A Hold-Up*	208
XX	*To the Road Again*	223
XXI	*A Girl—and a Tragedy Entitled "The Mad Hobo"*	238
XXII	*Prohibition and Hot Dogs*	251
XXIII	*The Endless Trail*	264

BACK DOOR GUEST

CHAPTER I

WHY AND HOW I WENT TO THE UNITED STATES

BEING an unrecognized genius was getting less interesting every day, and editors were becoming so more and more regretful that I knew I must go away before some of them burst into tears. Whimsically I heaped all their letters, where they told me of my "undoubted talent" and "little short of genius," in the fireplace of my room and applied a match to the windward bottom corner of the pile. There was no bitterness in my soul as I watched. We knew (the writers of those despairing epistles and myself) that public taste in fiction is

lamentably low, and that while we (the same sorrowful editors and myself) must always worship true Art, the vulgar public with the shillings for the magazines will insist on the hair-raising, heart-tearing effusions that are not Art. None of the editors told me about their starving wives and little children, but I understood. I was different; neither woman nor sickly child tied my wings. I could fly from this shame of pandering to low taste. I unearthed my sailor's discharge book and packed my sea-boots. Two days after bidding temporary farewell to my hopes of becoming a new Prophet of the Pen, I signed on as an A. B. on the *Berengaria.*

The feel of a deck to a sailor! The sight of masts sticking high above the quay sheds! Here is a subject for an artist! Can you not picture the eager face gazing on the ship that is to take him away from failure to the waters he loves? I would write a poem about my return to the sea!

But the forty-five-thousand-ton Cunarder failed to inspire me. For six days I pushed a scrubber or a holystone over immaculate deck planking, and on the seventh day I "jumped" in New York City. The nearest I reached to poetry during that voyage was one night when I came on deck to help wash down. A wind smote me suddenly and I said: "God help poor sailors on a

night like this." I had forgotten that I was on board a ship in mid-Atlantic.

There may come a day when the Board of Trade and the Cunard Company will demand to know why I deserted the *Berengaria* in America. I would like to explain that I did not notice I was ashore until I bumped into a tree in California. If that subtle piece of flattery does not pacify the owners of this magnificent vessel, then my suspicions are wrong and they *do* want their passengers to know they are taking a sea voyage. Once, I did get an impression of being on a pier, but that is the nearest I got to feeling I was back at sea.

CHAPTER II

ADVICE TO IMMIGRANTS, AND A FEW OBSERVATIONS ON NEW YORK

I HAD jumped ships before, but never to enter a country where immigration laws are as strict as in the United States. Also, Jock Kelso, my confidant and brother of the holystone, had told me that the bo'sun suspected that I was trying to clear out of the ship; so I had to go carefully.

I had to leave most of my clothes behind to avoid suspicion. All I could take ashore with me were a spare shirt, spare suit of underwear and two pairs of socks, all worn under my usual clothing. In various pockets I stowed a few collars, half a dozen handker-

chiefs, a shoe brush, a comb, and the fabulously important "papers" that men of my class value above all other possessions. With my belongings distributed over my person as I have described, and with three dollars in my trousers pocket, I landed in the United States.

I got a fright at the dock gates when a policeman hailed me.

"Got a card, Son?"

I produced a company landing card with my name and rating on it. The policeman looked at my waist curiously.

"Say, you look kind of stout around here," he commented, at the same time opening my waistcoat and sticking his hand deep among my numerous garments, I waiting, trembling, while he fingered each garment.

"You must feel the cold a lot," he said as he withdrew his hand. The comment can only be appreciated in all its subtlety by knowing that this happened on a summer day with a temperature around eighty-five degrees in the shade and perspiration rolling down my face as my body stifled in its extra covering.

"There's no law against wearing clothes, is there?" I demanded, summoning a smile. "Even in America!"

"Not a one, Buddy," he said with a grin. "Go on . . . beat it . . . and good luck!"

I left the policeman and stepped into West Four-

teenth Street. I mention this action as an excuse to introduce a little local color into my narrative and to draw the attention of all proud citizens of America to the deplorable view of their great city they force upon the new arrival.

First there is noise and dust, clanging street-cars and crazy motor-cars. I have seen Hungarian peasants stand outside the landing sheds opposite West Fourteenth Street for hours, afraid to cross that welter of wild-colored taxicabs and rumbling trucks. This, I consider, is too sudden an introduction to United States hustle. A bridge across this road, or a bridge across the Atlantic, would be an act of mercy. It seems unfair to have such traffic when there is only the sea to retreat into.

West Fourteenth Street itself is complete disillusionment for any one who has come across the world to see paving stones of gold and dollar notes used as pipe-lighters. On one side of this entrance to America is a row of beef carcasses, and on the other side are barrels of potatoes and pumpkins. To place a market for such stuffs right in front of the first few steps of a newcomer is sticking commercial policy down fresh throats too crudely. Whoever thought of putting the overhead railway bridge right across First Avenue, and blotting out any encouraging view of the city from the dock-side, merely put the last touch to what seems a general con-

spiracy to destroy any romantic pictures the new arrival may have built.

New York has many beautiful landing-places, and if only in mercy to the dreams of palpitating citizens-to-be, it should use them instead of West Fourteenth Street. I might suggest the Battery without the waste of paper.

Having perspired all along this most ugly of streets, I thought I should like to remove some of my clothing. Here I might make a delicate reference to the lack of . . . of poor men's dressing-rooms. I had finally to wear my whole wardrobe to New Jersey and the home of my cousin.

CHAPTER III

NEW YORK CITY

SURVEYING New York is not only a solemn duty, it is a rite. Hanging over one's head is the curiosity of the world, for every one is interested in the City on the Hudson.

"What did you think of New York?"

I started by hating it, and ended passionately fascinated. New York gets you that way; there is no lukewarm "liking" it. New York loves itself. Like any vain creature, it shouts its magnificence into your ear, until you are forced to look. You feel you must either applaud or curse. Foreigners, particularly Britishers, usually commence by cursing.

It is an upstart; it is blatant and boasting; it pours out impression after impression, until you cry aloud for a calculating machine. No mentality could record what New York lays out for admiration or criticism.

I wanted to be amused by New York, at first. "Yanks" are full of boast, and I was out to find amusement in their bombast. My amusement lasted for a very short time, and I began to be puzzled and a little annoyed in discovering that New York was proving itself something remarkable.

It would not take anything or anybody for granted, except its own magnificence. It was more than alive, it was kicking with mad energy. To a Britisher this is disturbing. My easy-going character was being poked at and laughed at. I got really annoyed, and began to call New York rude names.

"Stand in line there!" it shouted at me. "Let's look at you. . . . All right, hustle and do something."

"You go to blazes!" I answered. "I'm here to look at you. . . . You're a big bluff."

"So?" New York bawled back. "Say, we run dollar trips to the Bowery and Chinatown for your kind. . . . Lookers-on are not amused in this city . . . they amuse. You haven't a dollar? Then do something."

"You think I can't?"

"Do it . . . do it . . . do it."

"I tell you I can. . . . Wait till I look around and get settled."

"Do it . . . do it . . . do it."

It is everywhere, this command to do something. The trolley cars jangle it on their bells; the automobiles shriek it as they dodge for a place farther ahead in the crammed streets; the young faces are eager, seeking the doing of it; the old faces are pretending to be young so that they can try to do it too.

There is no sitting back and surveying the field, no gradual insinuating of yourself into a place you have chosen. You smash your corner out of high places, or fall into line and push with the lesser minds. But be you great or small, you must be a plugger, and start the minute you arrive. New York dares you to stand still.

If your business is sin, then sin like hell; if your business is preaching, then preach until your throat falls in. Saint or sinner, honest man or rogue, New York does not give a damn, but you have to be one hundred per cent. whatever you are.

Put everything you've got into it, New York orders; so friends become "contacts," and nothing is sacred that will help your advance.

I would not have written such a book as this if I had never been in New York. The parts of it where I show myself a weakling, the bitter moments of self-disillu-

sionment, would have been closely cupboarded skeletons if I had not learned in New York to "put everything I had into my work." Maybe I have lost something that was fine in my character; I prefer to think that I learned to be not ashamed of being myself. I was ashamed of a streak of sentimentality I possessed; New York taught me to be frankly sentimental. I tried to be modest when all the time I knew every man worth his salt is full of vanity; New York taught me to be openly vain of myself.

Because New York made me think like this, I began to hate it. I felt it was beating me to its requirements. I was a writer, I claimed. It read the stuff I had written and shook its head. I was trying to be different, but I was not forcing my difference on New York. "Tell us about yourself," New York invited, and listened. "Interesting and colorful," it agreed. "Your business is writing adventure stories. You have led an adventurous life . . . use it . . . write adventure."

I protested. I was not a writer of sensational fiction, and would not disgrace myself by trying.

"You have got to," New York insisted. "Your other stuff may be genius, but you're not strong enough to force it down my throat. If you could do that, I would fête you. You can not, so you are going to do what I say."

And the hateful part was that I had to try to do what New York said, though I knew I never could, successfully. Because no one can be other than madly virile in New York, I had to try . . . just to answer the challenge to do something.

I failed, of course. At that time I could not fit in, and so, I had to get out. I was not powerful enough to make New York listen to me, but I was stubborn enough not to fall into line, as she ordered.

As far as my writings go, New York has the last laugh. I merely claim that I have not become one of her slaves, but am imitating her methods by looking on myself as of supreme importance, and telling the world.

In imitating her, I bend the knee. My hatred turned to envy and fascination; I wanted to be like her. One loves London in a detached way, but wants to be a New Yorker. I would not live there for all the success in the world, but I am a New Yorker.

My work at the Pennsylvania Hotel was saturated with this spirit of New York. It was curiously like playing at soldiers. I was all the time acutely conscious that I was an elevator operator in the Pennsylvania Hotel, New York City. I was doing something.

The eleven hours' duty each day was a period of high-strung effort, although the physical requirements of the work were small. And I do not think the great Statler

organization can take all the praise for instilling in me the ambition to do my job well. I found the same involuntary calling forth of every faculty in all the positions I held in New York.

Briefly, New York demands all of you. In London a man can find a place and remain a Scot, a German, a Turk, or whatever he was born. In New York he has to become a New Yorker. The Jews in New York are losing their racial noses; even those world conquerors have to fall into line and be one hundred per cent. New Yorkers. As proof, where is greater?

I was there for six months. New York was not aware of this to any extent.

I operated an elevator in the Pennsylvania Hotel (and please note: two thousand rooms; two thousand baths); carried furniture from a truck (English: van or lorry) to the top floors of most of the high buildings without elevators in Greater New York; sold mechanical toys in a famous store; operated another elevator (for a very short period) in a Park Avenue apartment hotel; disposed of short stories to two far-seeing editors; and retired breathless from the scramble.

I discovered that as London is the capital of Scotland, so is New York the capital of every place except the United States, with a leaning toward Palestine, Italy and Ireland. There are, I have been told, a few New

Yorkers by birth, but they are hiding in Brooklyn.

There is only one sin in New York, and that is not being in a hurry.

To retain your sense of humor in New York, I advise every one to visit the vicinity of the reservoir in Central Park about eight A. M. This is the place and time when stout—very stout—citizens don sweaters and chase one another around the wire-netted enclosure. I always considered they were on the wrong side of the wire netting, but as I happen to possess a gigolo figure, perhaps I am prejudiced. Anyhow, Central Park is a good place to learn Italian.

Broadway is one of the few places about which the film camera does not lie. It is all you think about it.

Shortly after I arrived in New York, I read an article explaining and describing the American type of manhood and womankind. This was a deep scientific attempt to explain the evolution of the slim figures of the girls and the hard resolute chins of the men. I do not wish to disparage the writer's theories, but I suggest that he walk, or try to walk, along Broadway any evening after six. He will then discover that a stout figure or a weak chin would not last five minutes in that turmoil. The national type he described has evolved because nature's first duty is self-preservation.

I saw faces, heard automobiles, and high above me

were walls of flashing electric signs; but I had to sneak down at six o'clock one morning to see Broadway.

I had not seen the sky-line from the *Berengaria,* for I was humping mail sacks in the 'tween decks as she came up the harbor. As soon as I could, I took a ferry trip to Staten Island; for I was haunted by fear of the scorn that would be cast at me if I could not give my opinion of the sky-line.

What words my diary contains describing New York's greatest glory will remain where they are. I read the following description in a pamphlet issued by some American business house: ". . . and the skyscrapers peering over each other's shoulders to see who was coming up the harbor." I can not better that.

There is a famous picture theater (palace would be the best word, but I wish to be up-to-date) on Broadway. An American gentleman, reputed to have disposed of a rival who was in the building trade, exclaimed, upon being released from the asylum, "My God, I shot the wrong architect!" I make no apologies for borrowing this Manhattan chestnut. It has become fashionable among the highbrows to cast artistic scorn on this theater; but I intend to defy my brother and sister humbugs and to state publicly that the theater in question is the most magnificent and inspiring piece of architecture in the United States, and I have been to Coney Island.

When I had made enough money, I visited this picture house. I paid a dollar to a Ziegfeld girl in a glass case, entered an Egyptian museum, passed into an awe-inspiring hall of marble, mirrors and crystal, where the handsomest men in America, clad in rich uniforms, made graceful gestures toward a magnificent stairway. I ascended (to climb would be too ordinary) and found myself in a treasure-house of art, where old masters, or copies of them, were enshrined every few yards; walked along a brocaded passage, wishing I had hired knee breeches and a wig; risked a curtained doorway and discovered myself in some one's private music room. I backed out before any of the languid gentlefolk who lounged in gilded chairs, or the butler who stood at attention beside a gold piano that played tinkly fairy music from a roll, noticed me.

In the next hour I walked ten miles, and visited the College Room, the Gold Room, the Blue Room, Ye Anciente Roome, the Dutch Room, and a dozen or so more rooms; but I could not find the cinema.

Exhausted and nervous, I decided to go home. I think I was sobbing when, at last, I fell through a curtained doorway and found myself in thick darkness. The cinema at last!

I sighed, and waited for the screen to light up. I had, apparently, come in during an interval between two pic-

tures, for all was darkness. I felt some one standing close to me.

"Excuse me, sir!" I said. "What is the next picture?"

"Picture?" he repeated suspiciously. "Say, you're in Forty-third Street."

At that moment a car flashed past and I realized I was indeed outside without having seen the pictures.

I can scarcely claim that my position as an elevator operator in the Pennsylvania Hotel taught me much about the New Yorker. Residents of the city only came there to have their shoes shined or to meet their friends in the lobby.

The two thousand rooms, and, I presume, the two thousand baths, were always fully occupied, however. Our guests were solemn gentlemen from the Middle West, attending conferences (an American disease) and taking their responsibilities most seriously; an Englishman with a portable typewriter and a cowboy hat (one of US, I detected); jovial drummers with cigars and anxious whisperings as they inquired if any of the bellhops could get them a bottle of "Holland Gin" (sic); a lady from Boston who knew I was an Englishman as soon as I spoke, (I always said "Fo-ah," hoping I might be taken for a penurious duke, and was glad the Boston lady did not live on floor "Thrrree"); a nervous old

lady who insisted on being carried alone and told the manager I was most careful with her, but never gave a tip; and other—many other—types of visitor to New York.

They were not the slightest trouble. Americans have a weakness for breaking the law, but they are most obedient to the rules of private companies. To watch how they jumped in and out of my elevator at my "*If* you please!" was most satisfying. If I had tried to make the guests of an English hotel step lively they would have frozen me and written to *The Times.* Americans are much more docile.

A large card, hanging in the hotel staff-room with THE GUEST IS ALWAYS RIGHT on it had much humor. Though, I confess, mine is poor humor and sad appreciation of the sporting manner in which the average American assists public companies to give him first-class service by obeying promptly the requests of these hotel and transportation companies.

I moved into the "Five Hundred" when I left the plebeian Pennsylvania for an apartment hotel on Park Avenue. I was in this second position only one week, and left under a cloud.

It was a beautiful hotel, such as we foreigners expect the homes of rich Americans to be. There were valuable paintings in the lobby; the scheme of decoration

was Russian, I was informed; the carpets were like moss underfoot; and even the flowers and plants appeared more natural than real ones.

I had to put pomade on my hair, and was taught how to indicate a direction with my hand without presenting the flat ugly palm. I practised for hours to get the gesture perfect, and felt like a ballet dancer every time I told a guest, "This way, please." In this hotel, "This way, please," was a respectful prayer.

The bell-hops had to stand at attention, in positions carefully allocated by a tableau organizer, and the guests paid fifteen thousand dollars a year rent, because they liked that sort of thing.

I loved this job. My respectful smile was a physical and artistic joy to me, and I reveled in the luxurious surroundings.

But I fell.

A guest gave a party. Returning to his apartment in my elevator after the party, he told me he had spent one thousand dollars on the entertainment. I gasped; and would have gasped even if he was not paying fifteen thousand dollars a year for my gasps. He looked on me kindly.

"You boys will find a half-barrel of good ten-per-cent. beer in the ballroom," he said. "Go help yourselves."

We found it, as he had said, in the hotel ballroom on the ground floor, where the party had been. Four of us gathered round the barrel. I am Scotch, the hall-cleaner was a Frenchman, the other elevator operator was a Maltese, and the night clerk was a Texan. It was like seeing a thistle in the Sahara.

When the manager arrived at seven-thirty, he found the night clerk behind and under his counter, the hall-cleaner remaining loyally beside the barrel, I was singing *Annie Laurie,* accompanied by the fierce ringing of some guest on the tenth floor who wanted to use the elevator, and the Maltese had gone home.

I left at eight o'clock.

About this period I went in search of Sin.

New York, I was informed by all kinds of people and the newspapers, is the haunt of viciousness and immorality; its young people are depraved; and a girl is no kind of girl unless she goes away for week-ends and carries a flask. I would see this degeneracy for myself, and then write scathing articles about it. What a revenge on New York, I thought, for teaching me to be the sort of writer who goes in for this type of journalism. You have dragged my soul from the heights, I thought darkly, and made me touch mud. I will gather the mud up in handfuls and smear it all over you. I

wished I could let loose a thin, satiric cackle to round off my new character.

Evening after evening, I patrolled the streets, searching for signs of vice. I was never approached by one woman, and during the whole time I was in New York I never saw a solitary prostitute. Coming from a country where we take street-walkers for granted, this was disappointing.

As I became familiar with New York, and made acquaintances, I found the sin I had heard about, and it was not sin. Or rather, not sin any more than a child who steals a newly baked cookie is a thief. The young people of America do drink poor whisky and dangerous gin, the girls do tuck up what skirts they possess and do the black-bottom, the young men do know each vice by its Christian name, but there is a laugh with their sinning that, somehow, makes me hesitate to take their wickedness seriously.

Sin is an adventure, an expression of youth, to these collegiate boys and gold-digging girl friends. They go searching for it much as I jumped the *Berengaria.* It gives life a "kick" to play around. Americans are the most boyish sinners in the world. Vice is not a condition of body, but of mind. Accept that definition, and America's young people are as clean as any I know. I would even say they are cleaner than most.

Peculiarly enough, they will be highly amused at my judgment, if not considerably offended. They try so hard to impress their sinfulness upon every one, including themselves.

To make America the most moral and dry country in the world, the hysterical reformers should have a law passed prohibiting sobriety and chastity. I am convinced that the day such a law went through Congress, young men would be chalking straight lines on Broadway, and defying the new law by walking along them; and clubs would be formed where "truly rural" and "parallelogram" would be the pass-words. If being frankly and intensely young is a sin, then America, and New York in particular, are past redemption.

I am, of course, not whitewashing the type of degenerate that soils every great city, and of which New York has its share (and advertises them where other countries' cities keep a discreet silence). I write only of the average young folk.

CHAPTER IV

IN SEARCH OF AN ARTIST IN BOHEMIA

NATURALLY, when I found myself in New York, one of my most ardent desires was for the company of soul-mates, brothers and sisters of the Intelligentsia. Among ordinary mortals I had to restrain myself; only among artists could I be an artist.

Could I read aloud my dearest creations to Bill, my neighbor of the elevator alley; or Shorty, my companion of the furniture truck? Assuredly not! I must find minds capable of soaring into the Lofty Heights; souls attuned to beautiful ideals, and so on.

Quickly I discovered that New York has a place where the Arts may toil or frolic unrestrained. A col-

ony where fervent (and, being New York, they were feverishly fervent) young worshipers could live unmolested and unscorned. Live in Greenwich . . . with fine sarcasm . . . Village, and write a version of Marco Polo, and the glory of creating is yours, I was told.

One afternoon I followed a lady with straight bobbed hair and low-heeled shoes. If there is such an animal as the Intelligentsia, I reasoned, it dresses like this. The lady mounted a down-town bus, and I followed her. She dismounted at Tenth Street and entered a disappointingly respectable hotel, leaving me on the sidewalk feeling lost.

I walked toward Washington Square, and seeing grass and trees, was encouraged to inquire from a passer-by where the Village was. He told me I was in the Village.

Even the trees and grass of Washington Square could not make my surroundings look like a village; and the name seemed to sneer at me when I peered into the tangle of mean dirty streets I wandered past. I chided myself for being too much the purist, and was heartened when I saw a basement decorated with black and yellow lettering: THE PIRATES' CAVE.

Continuing my exploration, I found THE GOLDEN BUG, THE MAD FIDDLER, THE CRAZY COON, and some old stableyards where the lofts had been painted bright

reds and greens and decorated with flower-boxes. I brightened on seeing these things, for even a modest worshiper knows a shrine when he sees one. I began to believe I was at last in the abode of the Bohemians, and only required a starving artist to die at my feet, then, to make me perfectly happy. I was fair enough not to expect that really; starving artists always die in garrets.

I decided I would enter one of the fascinating restaurants and meet a live one. I would tell him, or her, that I, too, was an artist, and we would pour our ideals into each other's ears and draw masterly caricatures of the other diners. Or, at least, my neighbor would draw caricatures; I know what Mr. Euclid said about a straight line, but I can not make one. Perhaps a maddeningly fascinating model would jump on to a little round table and dance a fandango.

None of these things happened. I went into one of the restaurants and paid two dollars for burned chicken and a supporting company of side-dishes. (In America, vegetables are not allowed to associate with one another until they are inside you.)

While I ate, I watched the other diners furtively. They appeared to me disappointingly respectable, and though they ate their food with frank enjoyment, they showed no signs that they were attacking the first meal

they had had in months, or that they were celebrating the sale of an epic poem or a great painting.

I ate three lunches that afternoon, going into three restaurants to give Greenwich Village a fair trial.

I saw nothing that might not happen to any mere mortal, and I was beginning to lose heart. Then I reasoned generously, perhaps they did not recognize me as a brother artist and were shy. Nobody likes to dance fandangos or tear his hair in front of perfect strangers. I decided to approach Greenwich Village more cautiously. I would join an art club.

That evening I found a letter in a newspaper requesting that any young writer or artist who was lonely in the Big Cruel City would communicate with the writer, with a view to forming a get-together club. That word "get-together" warmed me like a glowing fire, and I wrote to the advertiser (a lady) telling her about myself and how I was parched for lack of lofty-minded comrades.

It was quite a masterly plea, and I was not surprised when, a few days later, I received a sympathetic invitation to telephone the advertiser. The address on the sky-blue note-paper was Greenwich Village: I had found my way into the haunts of the Intellectuals!

I telephoned on a Sunday forenoon. (As I expected to be asked to call, I had to wait until my laundry came

home on Saturday evening.) A pleasant, friendly voice invited me to call that afternoon. So pleasant, so friendly . . . and so youthful was the voice that I suggested to the young lady—young and beautiful, with languorous eyes and a soul that floated far above the sordid world, was the picture I could see along the telephone wire—that she should join me at lunch.

She agreed, and instructed me how to find her apartment. Fast though the New York subway is, it was not nearly fast enough on that bright day.

Near Sheridan Square I found the block of flats where my lady lived on the bottom floor. The hallway smelled of cooking and was satisfyingly dirty. Bohemia was proving all it should be.

A woman opened the door when I knocked. She was little, and her stout person poured over the edge of a black gown that sparkled with black beads. Two fragile silk straps had almost disappeared into fleshy shoulders in their desperate effort to prevent the little woman from spreading all over the front of her frock. Her ankles overlapped her shoes, and the high heels she wore made her appear as though on stilts.

She beamed on me; her cheeks were bright vermilion, and her hair was an amazing crown of gold.

"Mr. Kerr?"

I smiled. "Yes. Is Miss Dickson at home?"

"I'm Miss Dickson."

I had a sudden horrible vision of myself and this over-packed frock walking between lines of grinning waiters. What if the straps broke? I would be drowned in surplus flesh . . . I had invited her to lunch!

I followed her to a room that seemed to be fully occupied by a huge day-bed bearing a black cloth cover decorated with a futuristic design in red and gold. The room was not clean, and a table was set for two in one corner.

"I thought maybe we could have lunch here," the lady said coyly, "and you could pay me what you would have paid for our lunch in a restaurant."

I almost said, "Double that amount," but my national canniness saved me, and I agreed to her bargain.

The lunch was delightful, until she produced a bottle and said: "I've got some real home-made beer for you, Mr. Kerr. It was only bottled yesterday, but I know you Britishers like beer."

I tasted it, and placed the glass aside. My hostess looked from my face to the glass several times during lunch.

"Don't you like my beer?" she inquired anxiously.

"It is splendid," I assured her, "but we Britishers never drink quickly. We linger over it, if you understand."

"That is what they call drinking in the Continental style?" she asked eagerly.

"Yes," I answered gratefully, seeing how at once she sipped delicately from her own glass.

By being a drinker of the Continental school I was able to make one glassful of the terrible liquid last three hours. Bless the Continental styles!

During the three hours I listened to the little woman describe the allurements of the Get-Together Club, and waited with tensed nerves for her to soar. She did not; and when she told me that she was going to try to get a famous butter-and-egg man to open the club, I became frankly suspicious.

"How many members have you?" I asked.

"None just yet," she said cheerily. "But I got about thirty letters from likely people." She took a bundle of papers from a drawer and handed them to me.

An insurance clerk who liked poker, two typists who were lonely and crazy about dancing, a truck driver who was taking a correspondence course in finger-print detection but wanted to meet some live folks, a salesman, a postman, a sailor and a lot of other people had poured out their lonely hearts on paper with a lack of restraint that made me blush, particularly when I remembered my own letter.

"Can these people talk about Freud, and Material-

ism, and Impressionistic Art, and Eugene O'Neill and all that?" I asked in amazement.

"What?" she demanded. "Freud? Who's he?"

My hopes were crashed into disillusionment. "Why, he's . . . what we'll have to talk about in an Art club."

She appeared puzzled. "Will we? I thought we might dance a bit, and have a card game for small stakes."

"But surely," I demanded indignantly, "you would not disgrace your art by participating in such low pastimes?"

"Me? My art?"

"Yes! You are an artist, aren't you?"

She shook her golden hair. "No. I'm a clerk in a down-town hotel."

I rose and made my farewells.

"Come along when we open," she pleaded. "It will be lovely to have a real writer in our club."

I sneered at Greenwich Village as I hurried to the subway. Artistic colony! I would stay at East Eightieth Street.

That night as I undressed I thought of the little woman. My thoughts were not kindly; until suddenly I remembered something—and I thought then that perhaps some day she might become an artist. I had forgotten to pay for my lunch, and she had forgotten to ask me for the money.

I am nothing if not dogged, and I returned to Greenwich Village on several occasions.

In time, I found my way into cellars where a special knock is demanded before admittance and the food is bad enough to be the nourishment of artists. But I could not find what I sought.

People around me discussed real estate and the *Follies,* and they had hair-cuts regularly. I played with the idea of asking some of them if they were artists; but I never got beyond asking them to pass the salt.

I admitted defeat. There might be artists in Greenwich Village, but I could not discover them. I gave myself a farewell banquet the evening I recognized defeat, and half-way through this meal I decided on a bold course: I would ask some one.

Buttoning my coat tightly at the neck, and encouraging myself fiercely, I strode into the night. I dared not. . . . Yes, I would. A man bumped into me, and I grabbed his arm.

"Are you," I demanded, "an artist?"

He cringed away from me, his face paled with unutterable shame and his head nodded.

"I am." It was a sigh of despair.

"Then what are you doing in Greenwich Village?"

"I am sorry," he mumbled, "but you see, I'm moving to Sunnyside to-morrow."

CHAPTER V

I ARRIVE IN AMERICA AT LAST, AND MEET A BROTHER

My first sight of America came after I had been in New York for six months. I had answered an advertisement which offered board and lodgings in a country house to any young author or artist who would give a few hours' work in return for these comforts. As I required only time to write my masterpieces, without the sordid worry of paying landladies' bills, the job appeared to have been made for me. I pointed this out to the advertiser, and succeeded in impressing her.

The house was in Montrose, New York, and I was instructed to report there.

My employer, I discovered, was a lady with literary

aspirations and ideas. She had written several articles, which she would have told me about, had I not entertained her with the plots of the stories I had written and meant to write. Her ideas were brilliant.

The present idea was to fill her house, a fine place built during the Civil War and standing on the top of a hemlock-covered hill overlooking the Hudson River, with writers and artists as paying guests. The lesser idea of staffing the house with us "coming" geniuses was one of those fine touches which can only be described as masterly. They also save wages.

I do not know whether any masterpieces were conceived in that house or not. I carried wood, stoked a boiler and swept floors for three days. Then the lady broke the news that she did not think I would make a satisfactory house-maid. She was kind enough to tell me that she considered I had a great future as a writer, and added that I should devote all my time to my life's work. I was inclined to agree with her, but when I stepped away from that house with my suitcase and eight dollars in my pocket, I had a feeling that there would be obstacles in the path of that ambition.

This departure occurred on a Monday in February. A chest-filling day of sunshine and sharp winter air, and I paused on top of a hill on my way to the railway station to admire the Hudson River.

It was grand. The river was frozen over, and the hills of New Jersey were snow-clad. Around me the snow was clinging obstinately in every furrow, but the sun had melted it from the exposed ridges of land. Under my feet was the hard frozen ground with ice covering the wheel-tracks and footmarks. I had forgotten the shame of not being considered a good house-maid and I felt myself grow bigger in the glory of health and youth.

This was no morning to recognize defeat; this was a day to shout defiance. I would not go back to that stuffy city with its petty jobs and its artificiality; I would face west. New York had refused to recognize an artist; I was not even thought capable of sweeping a floor that was to hold the expensive soles of best-sellers. I smiled cynically; these were the only soles they had. Mine, the artist's soul, would go soaring across a continent.

There was no one near me on that lonely by-path, and I opened my suitcase and took from it a spare shirt, a dictionary, my shaving brush and soap and my papers. I parcelled these things together in my raincoat, securing it with its own belt. Then I debated whether I would send my suitcase back to New York to be kept for me, or complete my gesture by chucking it over a hedge. I sent it back to New York and reviled myself for a niggardly vagabond. Still . . . One never knows.

By twelve o'clock that day I had walked six miles toward the Pacific Ocean, and refused the offers of a dozen speeding motor-cars. I would walk; let who would ride. I was in no mood for being cheated out of my adventure, and the incident about the suitcase had to be defied.

This Spirit of Adventure lasted about ten miles on that first day, but concrete roadway is poor stuff to carry adventurers. Better, I thought, to use the prosaic car than to be knocked down by one; for American roads do not have side-paths, and a pedestrian is looked upon with suspicion. I decided I would complete my day's travel in comfort and safety.

Before this decision had been formed I had refused many lifts, but immediately I decided to ride no one slowed up to offer the opportunity. Even now, I can only consider the motorists along that road were having a joke with me, for I walked another five miles before a two-seater answered my wave and the driver opened the door.

I would like to append a list of the names of all the people I got free lifts from in my wanderings across New York State. During the first week of my travels I must have sat in every sort of car from a Ford laundry van to a ritzy Lincoln. I thoroughly enjoyed myself as a "hitch-hiker," the name for this method of seeing America.

Any American car-owner who remembers a red-haired young Scotsman with all his worldly possessions done up in an overcoat will please accept my thanks. In the language you have adorned so beautifully, "He learned about America from you."

There was a stout traveling salesman who pointed out the exact spot where Major André was caught by the American Forces, and proudly informed me that he knew a man whose father was a second cousin to another man who had the door-knob of the room where the English spy was held for a night after his capture. There was the other gentleman, a church organist, I think, who showed me the house where Lafayette stayed and the tree he planted outside Geneva. There were various others; they showed me Irving's home and the stream that the headless horseman jumped; Schenectady (the pronunciation of which name should entitle one to honorary citizenship), the home of the G. E. C. and Puck Bacon; the village that is not called Sing-Sing any more, because the natives got embarrassed when any one asked them where they came from; the proud gentleman who pointed out an "exact" copy of some famous Athenian building put up by a cultured millionaire as a garage. In fact, there were literally hundreds of car-owners who proved to me beyond all doubt that what had not happened in the State of New York would not

fill the last page in American history. I was really sorry when I discovered I had only fifty cents remaining, and that I would have to find a job or become a bum. I did not relish this last method of continuing my education, and I accepted a lift in a car going into Buffalo, guessing that this city could be no worse that any other New York city.

When I state that Buffalo could be no worse than the other cities, I refer to the chances of securing employment. Every town or city I passed through was in a bad way. Rochester admitted to having thirty thousand unemployed out of a population of two hundred and ninety-five thousand, eight hundred and fifty, and as there is no reliable record of unemployment, such as our English labor exchanges supply, there is every reason to suppose that figure is modest. The other cities were equally bad, and to ask for a job at even dishwashing was to be laughed at. I went to Buffalo, following the sailor's instinct for a seaport by choosing this important center of Great Lakes shipping.

Up to this time I had taken my travels somewhat light-heartedly. I had economized by eating in lunch wagons at twenty cents a meal, and sleeping in fifty-cent lodgings. I had accepted any invitation to meals offered by the various car-owners with whom I traveled, and had fared not too badly.

When I discovered myself in Buffalo with only fifty cents the humor of my situation began to ooze away somewhat. The temperature was around zero the day I arrived, and I was hungry after a long ride in the crisp air. I began to think.

Tightening your belt and grinning is a fine manly gesture. I commend it as one of the nicest parts of a book; but heroes in books don't eat unless the author who gave them birth fancies himself as a compiler of menus and a describer of the gourmet's joys.

I settled my problem by asking directions to the dockside. A sailor always feels less lost when he is near ships.

I found a hostel—called a "flop house" in America—where beds could be had for fifteen cents a night, and I booked up. The place smelled like an unwashed sock, and it was easily the most depressing and filthy hole I have ever been in, but it had a roof. I postponed eating until I learned where the most could be had for my remaining money.

Finding a place to sit down in the rest-room of the hostel was an adventure in itself. The rest-room was a long low-roofed place with a large plate-glass window at one end. The window was patterned with fantastic frost pictures that took away its value for lighting purposes, and the room was in gloomy semi-darkness. The

wooden benches round the walls were packed tightly with the most hopeless collection of human beings I had seen in my life. In the center of the bare floor stood another group who waited for vacant seats and made a concerted rush immediately any one moved.

I succeeded in getting sufficient space on a bench, and, squeezed in between a slim chap with the yellowest skin and boniest features I have ever seen and a ragged-clothes individual, I surveyed my new home.

The dominant impression was filth. The walls were hidden by it, the floor was thick with it, and my neighbors were its disciples. A stale smell permeated the place and filled head and lungs like an unclean curse.

I had, before this experience, lived with the work-shy on many occasions. I had carried a swag and swung an ax for my meals over half of Australia, and I know "swaggies" intimately. In Britain I have lived in English "spike" and Scotch Model lodging-houses; but that hostel in lower Main Street, Buffalo, was surely the last stand of beaten men. Just to be there for five minutes was to feel the deadly nausea of hopelessness creeping over a man like a slimy animal and stripping him of all decency. We sat on those benches like men whose spines had melted. Then, as though to contradict my morbid thoughts, the man on my right produced a piece of dirty paper and a stub of pencil.

With dull interest I watched him, my mind busy with thoughts of what would come my way when I had spent the twenty-five cents I possessed. Suddenly I saw that my neighbor was writing what looked, from the uniformity of the lines, to be poetry. I felt I must laugh. Here was another! I wanted to pat his shoulder and laugh . . . or cry with him at the stupendous joke we shared: Brother Artists!

He wore a pair of soiled blue dungaree trousers with a long tear across the knee that disclosed another pair of ragged trousers underneath; his boots were shapeless and split across the tops; he had a travesty of a jacket, and where it lay open at the neck I could see the collar bands of four unspeakable shirts. Here was the original model for all humorous artists.

"Writing poetry?" I asked.

A head crowned with thick black tangled hair was raised and two shadowy eyes met mine. Thick lips parted in a proud smile.

"Yeah; I'm always writing poetry."

I recognized the shy bombast in the voice; I too have been asked if I was writing poetry.

"May I look at it?"

He shook his head. "It ain't up to much . . . I just like writing it."

"Have you ever sold any?" I inquired.

He shook his head. "Never tried. . . . I just chuck 'em away when I write them."

Wise Poet; may no one ever tell you that your poems show "signs of unusual talent."

"Have you finished that one?" I asked.

He nodded. "Yeah . . . It's supposed to be to a girl I knew onct."

"Don't chuck that one away," I begged. "Let me have it. I like readin' poetry."

"Aw, it ain't no good," he protested, but he was yielding to my persuasion.

"I'll give you some sheets of note-paper for it," I bargained.

"Will you?" He handed over the piece of dirty paper, and I gave him a half a dozen sheets from my diary. He sat looking at the shiny white surface like a man fascinated while I read his poem.

"Tell her sweet moon please tell her I love her,
Oh, when smiling your sweetest and beaming above her
Moon, sweet, silvery moon please do me the honor
In showering for me sweet kisses upon her
Say, all ye little stars in the heavens up there
Smile sweetly upon her and tell her I care
Exalt her dear soul with the essence of love
Like an angel exultant in heaven above

Nestle softly beneath her, caress her fair feet
Oh, ye poor trembling leaves that fall in the street
Rain gently upon her, ye sweet golden things
While ye tell her I love her in fond whisperings
Every dear child of nature, all ye things lovely
Love her, embrace her, caress her for me
Chaste beauties of nature O please take my part
How I love her, please tell her, I have not the heart."

CHAPTER VI

A POET AND AN AUTHOR ENTER A HOUSE OF MERCY

"WHERE are you staying, Sam?"

The Poet and I had discussed Art for an hour, and I had advised him to go to the City Librarian and get a list of books he should study. He had seen no need for education, but I held myself up as the Shining Example.

"Me, I came from the gutter the same as you, Sam. I served four years in the War and have been knocking around since then. And I have sold stories in Australia and England and in the States . . . but I had to study to get there, Sam. You ain't worth a damn in our game if you don't get yourself an education."

"But I can write poetry," he argued.

"Maybe so," I insisted, "but there's things called meter and . . . and feet . . . that you should have handy." I looked at him triumphantly. "Now, would you know whether this poem you gave me is a sonnet or . . . or just an ordinary poem?"

He shook his head and appeared chastened. "I ain't up to that question, Scotty," he admitted. "What is it then?"

"Why, it's . . . it's a sonnet," I guessed, safe in his ignorance.

"Oh, I thought it was a poem."

Finally Sam promised that he would go to the library the next day, and we descended to Earth. This was when I asked him where he was staying.

"I've been at the De Gink last two nights," he answered. "I got another night to go."

"What's the De Gink?" I asked.

"The town runs it," he explained. "If you say you was born in Buffalo you get three nights' flop and supper and breakfast. There's two of them; the De Gink an' the Erie. The bums go from one to the other all winter."

"Sounds pretty good," I said. "What sort of food do they hand out?"

"You have to sign your name and have a bath and be examined for 'crums' an' disease; then they gives you

a sort of flannel night-gown and some slippers and takes your clothes away to be fumigated. Then the parson lines you all up and gives a sermon and a couple of hymns, an' then you get some soup. In the morning you gets burgoo and coffee and——"

I had a vision of myself lined up among that collection of red flannel gowns, and shuddered. I had been down, but never that far.

"There's lots of places where you can get eats in this town," Sam continued. "It's a good town for bums."

"You mean going round the houses?"

"Nope. Missions. Me, I'm going along to one right now. . . . Coming, Scotty?"

I rose. Here was a way to preserve my few cents and . . . well, as long as I did not have to wear a red flannel night-gown . . . I was sure they would be red.

Snow was falling when we got outside, and the wind cut through our clothes.

"Let's run, Scotty," Sam shivered. "Them boots of mine ain't much good."

We ran a short way up Main Street and turned into a side-lane. There, Sam stopped outside a large shop window painted brown. He pushed open a door with WELCOME painted on it, and we hurried inside.

Seekers after . . . whatever they had come for . . . already filled most of the dozen wooden benches in the

small hall, but Sam and I managed to squeeze in beside an old chap. The man moved along good-naturedly and grinned at me.

I looked around. The audience was made up of the same men I had seen in the hostel, but with a difference: there was a new eagerness in their eyes now, and they joked with one another as we waited for the preacher. I fell to talking with the old chap beside me.

"Getting a bunch in?"

He nodded. "The weather's drivin' them in. . . . Wisht they would hurry."

"What? The preaching or the coffee-and?"

He smiled and showed a set of good teeth. He did not look like a hobo, for he was clean and fresh in his appearance. He wore a thick mackinaw coat, and he appeared to be a man who had worked hard all his life.

"The coffee-and," he confessed. "I ain't never needed preaching. Always been able to keep my end up without it. Not that I'm saying anything about preaching. . . . I guess it's all right for chaps who need encouragement. . . . Me, I always been a battler."

I liked him for the boast. I think he felt his presence in the hall required justification, for he continued:

"I've had a bad break this winter. . . . Been sick and gone broke with boozing. . . . Fool game, but I would have made the grade if I hadn't been sick."

"What do you work at?" I asked.

"Camp cook, now that I'm getting old. . . . Maybe a turn at stoking in the mills. . . . I'm pretty spry yet . . . when I'm well. I got a bit of sickness left, but I'll be all right when the weather eases."

I guessed he must be about sixty, at least, and admired his spirit. Different sort from these others, I thought, as I looked at the grimy faces around me.

Suddenly the door was flung open, and a blast of icy wind hit our spines. We turned round resentfully.

"Hallelujah! God bless the snow. . . . Glory Hallelujah! God bless the snow!"

This strange greeting was roared out by a huge man in a heavy overcoat who had entered. He stood in the doorway, the cold wind sweeping past him and setting us shivering. The preacher, he could be no other, I knew, stalked into the hall, followed by a neatly dressed youth and two women.

"God bless the snow for sending all you men here this day." The well-fed face beamed down on us. "Bless you boys for coming here."

Obviously the size of his audience pleased the preacher, for he surveyed us benevolently as he walked to the raised platform.

"Oh, this is a blessed day!" he cried, in a voice that brought us upright on the benches. "God sent the snow

to drive all you poor sinners into this meeting. . . . God bless the snow!"

I was as impressed by the preacher's presence as the other men were. He reminded me of a ship's mate I once sailed under. The mate had been a bully of the worst type, and I hated him. I thought I could hate this preacher just as intensely. And I was angry at myself for feeling a touch of inferiority as the man's eyes swept along the rows of faces. Instinctively I straightened as though answering a challenge.

The service commenced with a prayer. I never lower my head in prayer, and I was glad to see the old workman beside me sat looking steadfastly at the preacher. If there is a God, He would speak to us as men meet one another, eye meeting eye and back straight.

The Poet, who, I learned later, was a devout Roman Catholic, was kneeling on the wooden flooring and taking his religion whole-heartedly.

The droning voice stopped, and the ladies chorused the Amen. The preacher straightened and gave out the number of a hymn. He beckoned to the youth, who came forward and stood on the edge of the platform.

"We want to sing this hymn with all our hearts," he cried. "Tell the Lord we are happy in His House."

The organ panted out the first few bars, and we shuffled to our feet.

Startlingly sudden, the youth's voice squeaked out the words of the hymn. No one else sang; we along the benches stood looking at the singer stolidly while he finished the verse. The preacher jumped from the back of the platform and glared down on us.

"Say, what's the matter with you boys? Aren't you happy to be in the Lord's House? Why don't you sing?" He waved his arms and brought them down with his clenched fists striking a small table he stood beside. I winced as the table shook under the blow.

"Sing! Let the Lord know you're happy!"

The organ was squeezed into action again, and with the preacher standing beside him like a threat, the young man shouted out the second verse. A voice in the front bench tried to take up the hymn, and we all looked at the heroic person. He felt our eyes on him, and his attempt ended in a thin humming and he grinned embarrassedly.

"I'm ashamed of you boys." The harsh voice lashed us and the angry eyes dominated every corner of the hall. "What did you come in here for if you won't sing? Did you come to praise the Lord for all His blessings, or did you come for to fill your lazy stomachs with unearned food? You will sing! I'll show you how."

He did. That tremendous voice shook us to action, and one by one we took up his challenge and opened

our mouths. The third verse thundered forth. I wanted to stand on the bench and shout the words . . . to show this boasting bully that I could make noise with him any day in the week.

Our faces were red with exertion when we sat down at the end of the hymn. The air was electric, and the preacher seemed to tiptoe across the platform as though he must not, by the noise of his boots, break the spell he had cast over us. We were leaning forward now, watching him warily.

"Oh, God will bless you boys for singing His praise like that," he said in a soft whisper. "He will know you are happy in His presence. Hallelujah!"

"Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!" one of the women cried shrilly.

We looked at her resentfully, for her voice startled us. The deep rumbling sound of the preacher's voice gripped us again.

"I'm going to tell you boys about King Belshazzar today," he said. "And show you how the Lord always has a comeback for the sinners. Boys, listen! This King Belshazzar was one of them Eastern rajahs. . . . A real aristocrat who was steeped in sin. You know what them rich men who run after stage women are? Well, this King Belshazzar was the same sort of guy. . . . The big butter-an'-egg man of the East, he was, boys."

The preacher was leaning a little forward, and his eyes were half closed as his voice droned out the story with unutterable scorn.

"He used to throw parties every night, boys. Wild parties, with women and booze. Not beer, boys . . . oh, no! Not beer for Old Belshazzar. . . . Wine, boys; the best wine in the world jest soaked his parties. . . . And he drank it out of . . . Whadya think, boys? Glasses? Not on your life, boys. . . . Kingy drank his likker out of vessels . . . VESSELS! boys . . . VESSELS of gold and silver for Old Belshazzar!" The voice had risen to a shriek almost, and I could see hands clench with sudden nervous jerks along the bench as he stopped abruptly. He smiled, a slow triumphant smile.

"The poor simp!" he whispered hoarsely. "To defy our Lord like that!"

I saw a man smile pityingly for King Belshazzar, and I too felt smugly glad that I had never drunk my wine from gold or silver vessels.

"And the wimmen, boys . . . This guy was mad on wimmin. He had hundreds! Wives and concubines by the score for Old Belshazzar, boys; the most beautiful wimmin in the land."

Now the preacher was swaying a little to one side, and I had a sudden memory of the bucko mate he resembled leaning over a café table trying to lick the lips

of a woman he was with. The face of the preacher was like that. The men were sitting well forward now, their cheeks flushed with excitement as the voluptuous picture was spread out for their imaginations to feast on.

"Them wimmin lay around on cushions at Belshazzar's parties, boys, with hardly a stitch on to cover their shameful bodies . . . an' maybe they danced for their boss, boys, and got round him, making a fuss to git popular with him. An' this old king lay around with his skin full of wine an' them wimmin pawin' him all the time. . . . A hell-raising old boy, eh, boys?"

A slight sigh, as though in envy, disturbed the stillness for a moment. Then the preacher's voice thundered, and we sat erect again, furtive-eyed and red with shame for the thoughts he had roused in us.

"But God won't stand for that, boys! . . . God's always got a comeback. . . . Oh, praise the Lord! . . . Oh, just God! . . . God punishes the sinners!"

Now a crafty smile came to the thick lips.

"Lissen, boys. . . . One night at one of them wild parties, King Belshazzar happened to look at the wall of his palace, and . . . he saw . . . Whadya think he saw, boys? . . . Ha! God was there in that room, boys . . . but all this sinner saw as he lay among his broads with his body soaked in wine was a hand, boys. . . . A hand writin' on the wall!"

A man along the bench where I sat laughed sharply. He looked round and met our startled glances, then rubbed the side of his head as though puzzled. He looked like a man awakening from a sleep. The Poet was leaning forward on the edge of the bench, his lips working slowly and his hands clenched. The old man beside me was looking at the preacher with a puzzled expression in his clean-looking eyes, and suddenly I felt disgusted with this man on the platform. He was unclean, and he had shared his rotten appetite with these poor devils. It was not fair to show such pictures to men who had not eaten for, perhaps, twenty-four hours, and who, certainly, had not eaten regularly in months. Why could he not tell them something simple? Something about his Jesus Christ helping a dead-beat. I would not listen to this talk any more. I leaned forward and put my hands over my ears.

But the voice thundered to the end of the story, and I had to listen. It ended in a roar of triumph, and then the preacher held up his hand.

"That's how the Lord punishes sinners!" he cried. "God is just and merciful, but He won't stand for everything."

He grouped us with a gesture and closed his fist as though holding us by the nape of our necks.

"How many of you boys are fit to meet your God to-

day?" he demanded. "How many of you have soaked yourselves in sin beyond all redemption?"

He smiled suddenly, and his voice encouraged us in our despair.

"None of you if you ask the Lord to help you. If you come to God this day . . . redemption is yours, boys . . . and you'll come, boys. You heard what I said about King Belshazzar. . . . That wasn't me talking, boys; that was God."

His voice gradually worked up to a frenzied shout. "But you gotta come humble, boys. . . . It ain't no good coming unless you're humble."

I knew him then. He was a bucko mate.

"Come humble," he shouted.

I wanted to sneer. Men like us are not humble. We must not be, or we will go under; our lives are too hard. We must not listen to this man, or he will strip us of our vanity and pride in our toughness. . . . We must not be humble.

"You must come begging forgiveness for your sins," he was saying now. "God will forgive you. . . . For He is a just God."

But we can not come begging like that! I wanted to cry. Maybe these bums can, but chaps like me and this old man beside me have got to keep our self-respect if we are going to battle out this life we have to lead. It

is our heritage to be independent and vain of our ability to stand alone. Can I go out to-morrow and bully my way into a job if I am humble? Yes, I know, only humble to your God. . . . But I don't know Him, and if I am right He is just like me and this old chap. If I am humble to one I will be humble to others. I clenched my fists and glared at the preacher. Somehow, he was stripping me of my manhood, and I would not allow him to.

"Come to the Lord!" he shouted. "Who among you will stand up and come to the Lord?" His fierce eyes searched the benches, his huge virile frame dominated us.

"Don't you understand?" he shouted. "Finish with this life you lead . . . this life of sin . . . think of the everlasting Heaven awaiting you . . . the spiritual life! You! Are you fit to meet your God? . . . You have been in jail. You have bitten deep of the devil's fruit. . . . You must come to God or you are damned everlastingly."

A few hands were raised, and I cursed the men who gave their souls away to this bully.

"Seven souls for God to wash clean!" he shouted. "How many more can I send to the Blessed Lord to-day? . . . Eight souls for God . . . nine, ten . . . oh, hallelujah! God bless you boys who have seen the light!"

The woman's voice shrieked, "Twelve, Brother!"

"Twelve! Bless you, Sister! . . . Twelve souls to be washed."

I wanted to rise and shout that he should canvass for a laundry. Hands were raising all round me, but I was glad to see the old man beside me was sitting tight-lipped and strong-looking. The fanatical eyes glared down on us, and men were looking at one another furtively.

"I'll try anything onct," some one in front of me said, and there was a nervous laugh, quickly suppressed as the preacher turned toward us.

"Nineteen souls coming to God. . . . Let me take two dozen souls from this hall to-day!"

But his bolt was almost shot. No more hands were raised. This angered the man, and he looked along the faces as though in search of more hands. His eyes rested on the old workman at my side, and he spoke sternly.

"You, Old Man . . . you have one foot in the grave already. . . . You are almost finished with the vanities of this earth. . . . Why do you not put up your hand?"

I wanted to shout that my neighbor be left alone. He was not near finished with this earth. . . . He was a strong fine man . . . as long as he believed in himself. This bully must not take his self-respect away . . . all right, his vanity, if you will quibble over a word. I was

glad that the old man's shoulders were straight, and he met the preacher's eyes.

"Old Man! do you hear the voice of the Lord commanding you to renounce your sins and come to Him? Soon you will have to go before Him for judgment . . . for you are no chicken, and your days are numbered. . . . What will you say to Him? What will happen to you? . . . You will burn in everlasting fire and brimstone. . . . Come, Old Man, come to your God!"

"Don't!" I cried, before I could stop the word. But I was too late. The old man's shoulders sagged suddenly, and the gray-haired head nodded twice.

Old Man, you may have earned a place in the next world, but you are finished in this one. I would have told him so, but he knew. His whole body gave proof, and he sat listlessly, like the other bums on the bench.

"Glory, glory to God!" the preacher shouted his victory to the God he served so madly. "My brother enters your fold, O merciful Lord. No more will he break your commandments, no more will he be shamed before Christian eyes. . . . Glory hallelujah!"

We sang another hymn and filed out of the hall into a restaurant next door. As we passed through the doorway the preacher gave us a "God bless you!" and a cardboard ticket. We followed one another to the high counter and were handed a mug of coffee and two buns.

I saw the old man bent over his mug, and I smiled contemptuously.

"Can I pay for this?" I asked the man who served us.

"Sure, if you're that crazy. . . . But you're getting it for nothing."

"Not nothing," I said, as I gave him the five cents he valued his coffee and buns at. "There's a man down there paid his immortal soul for it."

The waiter grinned.

My action in paying for my coffee and buns had an unexpected result when the Poet and I left the restaurant.

The snow had stopped, having apparently accomplished its mission, and we walked back to our hostel with the dignity becoming well-fed men.

"Say, Scotty, are you a writer . . . a real one?"

I felt hurt; after spending an hour instructing this illiterate poet in his art, and suddenly to discover he doubted my authenticity.

"Did I not tell you I was?" I demanded.

"Sure. . . . But guys is always telling me things," he hesitated. "But I guess *you* are all right."

"Oh, you do? Why this sudden belief?"

He smiled shyly. "Well, I saw you paying for your coffee-an', so I reckoned you must 'a' sold that stuff all right."

I shook my head. "Your reasoning is punk, Sam," I said. "If you are going to take that action as proof for or against my being a real writer . . . then it is against. Writers don't pay for their food."

"Oh!"

We left it at that and entered the hostel.

The rest of the evening passed slowly, and I was glad when ten o'clock came and I climbed the stairs to the dormitories. Thinking is a foolish pastime on an empty stomach.

The fleas won that night. I stripped the calico sheet off the bed in my first offensive; then, I tossed the blankets aside and pulled my jacket round my neck; next, I hauled the mattress away and lay on the metal bands that had held it, and, finally, I rose and went to the wash basin in the corner. There I removed all my clothes and sponged myself down with a handkerchief. As I was pulling my trousers on again I heard a loud gasping noise and a stifled scream. There was a scuffle, and a hoarse voice called from a distant corner of the dark dormitory:

"Christ! This guy's cut his throat!"

Beds twanged as men jumped from them. I gathered my wardrobe into my arms and ran to the corner. Some one lighted a match just as I arrived, and I saw the face of the old man who had sat beside me in the

mission hall that afternoon. The blood was coming out of his neck in a slow jerky stream, as though a pump were emptying him.

The light went out, and I hurried away . . . downstairs into the rest-room. There was a man sweeping the floor, and the place was bitterly cold. I put my jacket on and bundled my gear together.

"Say, there's a stiff up there, ain't there?" the sweeper asked.

I nodded.

"Say, you can't stay here," the other said. "Ain't no one but me supposed to be here now."

"But I can't get any sleep for the crums," I told him. "I'll keep out of your way."

He shook his head. "Can't, Buddy. . . . You have got to go to yer flop or git outside."

I got outside.

CHAPTER VII

I LEARN A NEW BUSINESS

I LOOK back on the moment at which I stepped from the hostel doorway into a freezing wind sweeping up from ice-laden Lake Erie as the most miserable of many miseries in my life. No editor could be as pessimistic as Main Street was. I had forgotten the old workman with the slit throat in the sorrow for myself.

Why, oh, why, had I not remained in my working-class respectability and become a pork butcher, my father's ambition for me? Instead of shivering in this foreign city, I would have been lying beside some sonsie Scotch wife; instead of turning a lonely coin in my pocket, I would be safe behind a post-office bank book.

I tried to laugh. To say to myself, "Remember that some day the world will sit back in its armchair and pay you thousands and thousands of pounds sterling for describing this moment; they will shudder as you tell how the front of your belt got entangled in the knobbly bones of your spine. . . . 'This is realism!' they will cry, and you will be acclaimed a genius." . . . But the yellow street lights shone no brighter, the wind warmed not a degree, and the glittering frost on the pavement sparkled as cruelly.

Where could I go? It was about two o'clock in the morning. I could not pay for a bed in another hostel; to lie down in a doorway or a railroad car was to invite death, for the temperature was around zero. I started to walk toward the town.

I tried to fit words together that would describe the hard desolation of the city's streets as I walked along, and succeeded in throwing off a little of my misery until I wanted to write down what I was composing. Then I saw a lighted coffee shop.

My few cents would buy me a coffee and buns. With new cheerfulness I crossed the road and entered the cozy place. The tallest and thinnest hash-slinger in the world greeted me with a friendly grin and pushed a mugful of steaming coffee across the counter. Coffee? No, the Elixir of Life in a delft vessel. . . . I suddenly

remembered King Belshazzar . . . and as suddenly forgot him as the scalding liquid thawed my throat and cleared a passage for the bun. Me, an artist? I could not be or I would have written an epic to coffee and buns at that moment.

"Just arrived, Buddy?" The waiter, who had been watching me with benevolent sympathy, spoke.

"No, I ran away from a zoo . . . the hostel."

He laughed. "I've heard about that place. . . . Got a reputation."

"Oh! It earns more than that." Then I added, "A chap cut his throat there to-night."

"You tell me? We had one go nuts here last week, he jumped out of the window. . . . It's the hooch, I guess."

"Not this one. . . . It was coffee-and."

He acknowledged the joke with a grin.

"Say, you're Scotch, ain't you?"

"Yes . . . then I'll tell you some maybe you haven't heard," I offered.

"Oh, I ain't going to tell you any Scotch jokes . . . if that's what you mean. But I'm Scotch . . . least my folks were."

"You don't happen to know where a Scotchman could fit into a job around here?" I asked. "That's more important just at present."

"Why? Up against it?"

" 'Bout five cents away from it," I said.

He thought for a minute, then he smiled.

"Say . . . they need a man here . . . dishwashing."

My heart leaped with joy. Here was the end of all my troubles. I would get this dishwasher's job.

"It don't pay any money," the waiter continued. "You get room and board for four hours' work a day."

I shook my head. "I'm not encouraging that line," I said. "There's plenty of that already."

The waiter did not comment on my scorning an opportunity to secure room and food. His understanding nod was our class's tolerance for queerness in others. "Jest thought you might have used it to tide you over," was all he said.

"Sure . . . I know that, but it's bad medicine."

I heard a shuffling movement behind me and turned to see another man come from behind a partition across the end of the lunch counter.

"Christ, it's cauld sitting back there!" he said in broad Doric as he slid on to one of the mushroom-like seats in front of the counter and wriggled his thin shoulders.

"Don't want to let the bulls see you, Mac," the waiter said. "It'll be colder at Windy."

"Tae hell wi' Windy! . . . Gi'e us a java, Slim."

The waiter filled him a mug of coffee, and the Scot's teeth chattered against the delft as he sipped it.

"This guy's from your country," the waiter introduced me with a nod.

The Scot looked at me interestedly.

"That so? . . . Been over long, Mate?"

" 'Bout six months."

"This is a better country than Scotland. . . . It's too bloody cauld over there."

This seemed a somewhat debatable reason, under the circumstances.

"D'ye know Glasga very well?" he asked.

"I come from Paisley."

"Oh, you're a 'buddy,' are you? . . . My brother's a big dancing teacher in Glasga. . . . Got pots of money, the big skite."

The waiter bent over the counter, his elbows resting on it and his hands clasped behind his neck so that he looked like a kindly-faced grasshopper with his long skinny limbs. "Say, that's funny . . . I always thought 'buddy' was an American word."

Mac glanced at him briefly. "American word!" he said with scorn. "There ain't any American words. . . . Ye pinched your language. . . . 'Buddy' is guid Scots . . . means a Paisley man." He turned toward me again. "What are you doing over here?"

"Nothing just now. . . . Looking for something."

His sharp features brightened suddenly.

"I can put you on to something good if you have any cash."

"I've got a nickel," I told him.

"Hard cheese. . . . I'm looking for a partner. . . . Some chap that can spiel."

"What's the game?"

"Strait-jacket and chains," he said, his eyes beginning to glow with an enthusiasm I seemed to have seen before. "I work the small towns . . . but I got on the booze and sold my outfit."

"What do you do?" I asked.

"I get the hicks to put me in a strait-jacket and tie me up with chains, and I get out of them in two minutes. . . . I'm good at that stuff!"

I recognized the glow in his eyes, and the boast in his voice; and I wanted to laugh. Here was another artist.

"I need somebody to travel round and do the spieling," he continued. "Somebody with a good flow . . . like this . . ."

He stuck out his chest and flung an arm out dramatically.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I have much pleasure in introducing before you the famous Russian . . . (Swede in Minnesota, an' Scotchman in Detroit) e-quil-e-bre-

est. This marvelous artist will demonstrate his stupendous, extraordinary, astounding feat of freeing himself from two hundred-weight of guaranteed steel chain and a regulation strait-jacket, as used in the United States Government bughouses. . . . This trick, ladies and gentlemen, has been performed in every city in the world by my partner, and he has appeared in the Opera-House, Paris, the Albert Hall, London, and foiled every scientist and lockmaker in America. . . . Before performing this marvelous feat, ladies and gentlemen, we wish to introduce to you—(chocolates is the best line) a box of these high-grade, hand-dipped, individual chocolate candies—and not only that, ladies and gentlemen, but each box of these wonderful chocolates contains a novelty for the ladies . . . a novelty, ladies and gentlemen, that you don't want to show the parson. . . . Come on, ladies and gentlemen, make yourselves glad you came here to-day by investing in this bargain. . . . The price of the chocolates *and* the novelty that will keep you laughing for a week is one dime, ladies and gentlemen!"

Mac rose from his seat and stalked up and down the restaurant, handing out imaginary boxes of chocolates to an invisible audience. "Come on, gentlemen, one for the girl friend. . . . See if there is a blush left in the world. . . . Read your future as she lamps the nov-

elty. . . . Best character reader in the world, boys. . . . If she blushes, she walks home . . . if she smiles, she means perhaps . . . and if she laughs . . . oh, boy, she's no lady! . . . One dime, for the girl friend, and then Professor Hoppoff will demonstrate his skill with the chains and strait-jacket!"

The waiter sighed enviously. "Gee, he's great!"

I watched Mac wistfully as he strutted about the restaurant. What would I not give for such a gift?

"You know your stuff all right," I complimented. "I would get all mixed up with them words."

He nodded. "I'm good." Then he shrugged his shoulders and looked at me with a bitter expression on his sharp face. "But I ain't got any gear, and a chap needs capital to get going. . . . A poor man never gets a break."

I nodded sympathetically, and the waiter supported me with a "Workin' men are held down all the time."

We three working men sat in silent sorrow for our lot. I wished I had some money to buy a partnership in Mac's business; for I rather fancied myself as a spieler, in spite of my modest disclaimer. We had another coffee on the house, and then the waiter hooked a thumb toward the partition.

"You can lay back there if you feel like a flop," he

told me. "The bulls come round about this time and pick up anybody that's sitting around."

I had no fancy to be questioned by the police, and I decided to accept the invitation. As I was sliding from my seat the waiter leaned over and spoke in a whisper.

"Say, I'll see the boss about you. . . . There's a job going here. . . . Not dishwashing, somethin' good. Be around about eight, and I'll introduce you."

I suddenly remembered that I was wanting a job, and I nodded eagerly. Then I found a place among a heap of old bags and fell asleep.

My waiter touched me with the toe of his boot, and I jumped up from a dull sleep.

"The boss'll be down any minute now," he said. "I got a feed waitin' for you before he comes."

I went into the front restaurant to discover a plate loaded with two eggs and a pile of chip potatoes. The last delicious potato had just flowed down my throat when I caught the waiter's eye winking at me. I looked round cautiously, to discover that a little fat man with a greasy skin and an equally greasy blue serge suit had appeared round the partition.

" 'Morning, Slim."

" 'Morning, Joe. . . . Say, I got a guy for that job."

"Huh. . . . Who is he?"

"Right here, Joe. . . . Cousin of mine from the Old Dart. . . . Jest arrived from New York."

Joe, the Greek (as he was known), examined me through half-closed eyelids.

I smiled ingratiatingly.

"How did you come in?" he demanded.

"On the highway," I told him. "Wad wouldn't run to the cushions." (Praying that my carefully remembered patois would impress him.)

"Huh. . . . Touch the booze?"

"If it's good," I confessed. "But I'm dry in this country. . . . I've got respect for a country's laws and my guts."

A faint smile on his thick lips rewarded this effort, and he turned to my newly found cousin.

"Did you tell him what the job is?"

The waiter shook his head vigorously. "No, Joe. Thought you would want to look him over first."

Joe scratched the side of his head and thought, for a minute or two, his small black eyes watching me keenly. He nodded his head suddenly.

"We'll try you out. . . . Your job is to make the beer. I'll show you how, and you'll get your keep and ten dollars . . . say?"

I "say-ed" it with wide grins and resisted an impulse to rub my waistcoat happily.

I was on this job for three months; three months in which I learned that prohibition is a one-sided sort of joke. Previous to this experience, and in common with other visitors to the United States, I had decided that prohibition was a joke, to be classed with mothers-in-law and Ford cars—irritating but harmless.

I had sampled "real Scotch" at fourteen dollars a bottle in New York night clubs, I had suffered the private brews of fiendishly hospitable Americans, and learned that the way to find a drink was to ask a policeman where the nearest speakeasy was. In short, I discovered in my first few months in America that prohibition must never be taken seriously.

When I was in my Buffalo job for a month I had decided that the humorist who perpetrated this joke has much to answer for. He has staged, not a comedy, but the greatest tragedy the world has known, by forcing on the people least capable of resisting it the devastating poison that takes the place of good drink.

It is safe to state that at the time I was there every building in Lower Main Street, Buffalo, New York, housed a speakeasy. Outwardly these places might be greengrocers', soft drink parlors, dry goods stores, eating houses, cheap lodging-houses, and even harness makers', but in each it was possible to get some sort of hooch.

There was no attempt made to conceal this trade. Several flouted the law to the extent of placing placards outside their doors, offering the good old-fashioned bribe of FREE LUNCH HERE TO-DAY. Why should they hide? The most regular customers were the patrolling policemen, and I have often worked over a crockful of home brew with a chatty cop leaning against the wall watching me.

The particular joint where I was employed was originally a cheap boarding and coffee house. The ground floor was the restaurant, and the upper floors were separated into tiny cubicles. When prohibition came, the back half of the restaurant was partitioned off and became the bar.

Our boarders were Great Lakes seamen, gandy dancers (railroad navvies) and any drifting workmen who had the price of a cubicle (fifty cents).

In addition to our paying guests, we always had about ten to twenty bums who were permitted to sleep in any odd corner round the bar. Mac was our star bum. Sometimes, when this collection of dead-beats began to overcrowd the floor, we arranged a police raid, and the surplus would be packed off to Windy, the detention farm outside the city. There had to be some sort of arrests made.

These bums were our regular clientele and unofficial

hosts. In addition to spending the few cents they made "pinning" or "panhandling" (begging), they increased our revenue in another, larger way.

Our real meat was the Lakes seaman and lumber-jack who arrived in town with a few months' pay and the desire to have a good time. That good time naturally included a drink.

The arrival of any such live one (as they were referred to among ourselves) brought our collection of bums around the bar where the newcomer stood enjoying his first drink. One of them would cordially recognize him as a townsman, or an old war comrade. If he refused to fall for this line, he was frankly panhandled. If he pushed the sponger away, the other bums promptly took his part. The air was filled with indignant protests to Joe, the Greek, and willing hands would lay hold of the "rotten bum what can't let a decent guy have his drink in peace," and he would be ejected by his own confederates. Having rid the live one of the pest, the others would return to the bar and sympathize. The majority of these wandering workmen are lonely souls, and this friendliness invariably succeeded in removing his suspicions. He began to stand drinks to the house.

If the live one did not collapse under the powerful bootleg whisky but managed to stagger outside that

night, he went minus most of his money. Drinks that cost twenty cents when he had his senses cost a dollar when his speech grew thick. No change was ever given to a drunk.

As a rule, however, the man collapsed. White mule is a truly descriptive name for the liquor supplied in these places; and its kick is always effective.

When the man was at the stage in which he could hold no more drink, he was escorted up-stairs to a bed by the obliging bums. They took off his boots for him, undressed him, and folded his clothes neatly, and when they returned to the bar after this charitable labor they were mysteriously possessed of a wad of bills.

The next morning a wild-eyed man, no longer live, would be wanting to know who had robbed him. Joe would be sympathetic, but frankly doubtful if the wad had ever existed.

"Must 'a' spent it 'fore you came in here," he would say, "but tell Scotty I said you could have one on the house."

The man, his head still thick, would hurry thankfully to the barman, and that was the end of the matter. Curiously enough, few of these men ever made a fuss, and of course they never took their suspicions to their natural enemies, the police.

We sold two kinds of drink: beer and bootleg

whisky. The beer, which I made in a concealed room on the first floor, was harmless stuff. Hops were boiled, and the boiling was mixed with some malt sirup and brewers' sugar. Powdered gelatine, yeast and ordinary salt were the other ingredients, and it was allowed to ferment for forty-eight hours. To give the mixture a "head" a spoonful of ordinary sugar was placed in each bottle before filling and capping. The result was a sediment-foul liquid, so weak that no drinker omitted to flavor it with salt, a saltcellar being a recognized bar-ornament in every speakeasy I have seen.

The bootleg whisky was denatured alcohol brought from the secret stills of the wholesalers and diluted by the barman. This was a dangerous drink.

If any ordinary drinker took three small nips of bootleg each day for a week, he would be a moral wreck at the end of that time. If he continued for another week, he would be physically ruined. After one night's drinking I have seen strong, healthy working men sag as though the stuff had melted their bones, incapable of distinct speech and imbecile in mind and body *twenty-four hours after their last drink.* No other intoxicant has the same devastating effect.

Unlike more honest drinks, this bootleg child of prohibition takes weeks to be purged from the human system. It clings with claws that give its victim no rest.

He is tormented with a craving that will strip him of all manhood, so that he will peddle his clothes and descend to any low depths in search of drink.

And bootleg is not the worst curse that prohibition has put upon these men who are so sincere in their naive pride of being citizens of God's Own Country: there is another temptation; and if bootleg is a curse, then assuredly "canned heat" is complete damnation.

Canned heat is a preparation made from old alcohol and methylated spirits, collected from hospital specimen rooms. Made into a paste with some wax-like substance, it is sold in all drug stores for a few cents a tin, and its purpose is for boiling water at picnics, making shaving water, or any of the little heating tasks that are not worth lighting a fire for. Our soldiers knew it in the trenches and found it useful, and I suspect many a girl heats her curling tongs over its blue flame.

Prohibition raised this simple home convenience to a new importance; as in the war the homely jam tin was filled with steel and became a death-dealing bomb.

They buy this canned heat openly at the drug stores, these unfortunates of the scalded throats. It comes much cheaper than bootleg.

The paste is put into an old handkerchief . . . "An old sock gives it more kick," they will tell you with grim humor . . . and the cloth is twisted until all the

spirit is squeezed through the weave into a can. Water is added, and "what have you?"

It is difficult to be moderate when writing of these things. When a man has learned the fineness of his own class, when he takes joy in watching the beauty of strong laboring bodies at the tasks that are his birthright, when he is a working man and jealously proud of the fact, and he sees this tragedy being forced upon his brothers, he wants to raise his hands toward the skies and cry, "What are You doing up there . . . You they call God?"

We had a live one arrive. He came in from four months in the woods, with bronzed skin and the clear eyes and graceful carriage of clean health earned by hard willing hands. He was proud of his new twenty-dollar suit and his collar and tie. He flashed his wad that he had saved so carefully for this holiday, and he opened his shiny suitcase to show us the fancy lining and new linen he had bought. Beautiful, simple as a child; this was a holiday to be enjoyed like a picnic. A happy laugh bubbled on his lips as he booked a cubicle, and he rubbed his big hands together gleefully as he called for his first drink.

Drunk? Of course he would get drunk. What other way of having a good time had this lonely man ever learned? Drink or women . . . the sins of great men.

He knew he would have a "head" the next morning, and his money would not last long. But what odds? He would be glad to go back to the woods in a week anyway. That would have been the foolish story of this man if he had been drinking the pint or glass that is every man's privilege in any other country but America.

But reformers had been looking after this sinful man. If he would not leave the drink alone, they would take it away from the naughty child. They did just that, and the man, being a man who was proud of being a citizen of the Land of Liberty and was naturally inclined to mind his own business and to want others to do likewise, squared his hefty shoulders and said, "Hi, what's the game?"

Joe, the Greek, and his ilk were listening to all this with a faint smile on their greasy lips, and now they tugged the man's elbow. "Say, never mind that sap . . . try this."

It is human nature to defy restrictions, and the man is mostly child in many ways. He puts his fingers to his nose and drinks. He coughs, and hates the stuff he has to take, but he is retaining his earned independence, and he soon learns to like this new substitute.

Our live one had his drink, and the word was passed round for the bums. He roared with laughter as one of them danced; another let himself be knocked head over

heels in a test of strength, in which our live one triumphed, of course, and another sang filthy songs. . . . It was a dandy night's fun, and the live one laughed louder and rubbed his hands together gleefully as he thought of the lonely woods and the hard grind of a camp.

He sang louder than any. "Don't tear it," he yelled to another vocalist, and poked the neck of a beer bottle down the bum's throat. His shoulders shook with merriment as an old-timer went down on his knees and tried to earn his drink by lapping it out of a plate like a cat. This was life, all right. Drink with me, or be damned for a piker. We are all real guys here . . . and "Old Joe's a bloody rogue. . . . C'mon, you greasy dago, come and drink some of your own poison. . . . Hell, this was great. . . . Me . . . I'm the whole works tonight . . . I can fight any rotten bum in the place and look . . . I smashed that box with one punch. . . . See that, you lazy hobo, that's a man's muscle. . . . Ha, ha . . . never mind, Buddy, wipe it off with that cloth and have a drink. . . . Money? Sure I got money . . . right here. . . . What in hell I want change for? Drinks to the house. . . . This is what my old man made me for. . . . I'm a hell of a fellow."

They carried him to his cubicle, and I, lying in my bed in the next room, heard:

"There, Buddy. . . . You're O. K. now. . . . Where's your money, Brother? . . . Put it under yer pillow so's no one can get at it. . . . Tha's right, Buddy. . . . You're a real guy . . . all the boys is laughing at your jokes right now . . . ain't many chaps like you around . . . lotta pikers around now . . . you're a real guy, all right."

Coins tinkled on the floor, and there was silence for a time. The live one's breathing became loud, and he snored. Feet shuffled out of the room and hurried down the stairs.

The next morning I inquired of Scotty, the barman (he having prior claim to our national nickname, I became "Red").

"Yes, they spent about thirty dollars after they came down," he said.

"They rolled him?"

He nodded absently as he bent over the sports page of his newspaper.

"I guessed that . . . the dirty bastards. . . . Still, that's his business."

Which was the wisest attitude toward all matters in the blind pig.

The victim came down-stairs in the forenoon. His eyes were wild, he had not washed, and his new suit had lost its spruceness.

"Say . . . anybody find any money?" he asked curiously. His impersonal tone told how little hope he had of its recovery. "I lost my wad."

"You was pretty drunk," Scotty said. "Maybe you spent it all."

"Hell, no. I had a hundred and ten dollars when I came here. . . . Some of them rotten bums rolled me." He looked at the half-dozen dead-beats who stood in the bar waiting for the next live one.

"You can have one on the house," Scotty offered.

The man's eyes lighted hopefully. "Say, can I?"

He hung around the bar all that day. It was bitter cold outside, and he had no place to go. Sick and sorry for himself, he yet craved the fascinating hooch. He knew he was being a fool . . . but all men are fools. In the evening he peddled his new suitcase and linen for two dollars, and the bums helped him spend it. At eleven o'clock that night he stripped his boots off and sold them to a waiter for fifty cents. He padded to the bar in his stocking feet and with a silly grin on his face. His hand trembled as he lifted the glass.

The next day he swapped his new suit for a dollar and a bundle of rags that had been, at some distant date, a suit. The craving had a firm grip on the man now, and he would stop at nothing to get more drink.

A live one arrived the next evening, and our work-

man from the woods danced for the new autocrat. The other bums, with a fine sense of humor, suggested all the favorite tricks to the live one, and their previous victim lapped up home brew from a saucer, choked over a two-pint bottle of the vile mixture in an attempt to earn it by drinking the contents of the bottle in one swallow, and laughed stupidly when the live one rubbed his nose in the spilled beer on the counter.

The next day he came down-stairs with dulled eyes and an inhuman twisting of his lips. Had any one seen a letter for him? This piece of rubber tubing was a suit of clothes; then he tore a plank out of the partition and shouted that there were two niggers coming through a hole in the wall. We carried him up-stairs and tied him in his bed.

I visited him that evening and found him weak, but sane. When I loosened his bonds he sat up and buried his face in his hands.

"I'm a fool, Red," he said. "I was just going to stay here for a night and then go and see my sister in Pittsburgh."

"Go, just the same," I urged. "She won't mind whether you have money or not." But I know the real pride of my kind and was not surprised at his refusal.

That was a half-hour I never wish to repeat. Some day, when I get religion, I shall stand at a street corner

and tell what happened in a husky voice, supported by many hallelujahs, I suspect. But this is a work of Art, and I must not be sentimental or too bitter. It might sound like a tract, and I am by way of being a humorist.

The following day I found this man sitting on his bed, staring at the wall. He was sober, but ghastly to look at. His features were set like hard granite, and the bones stood out prominently.

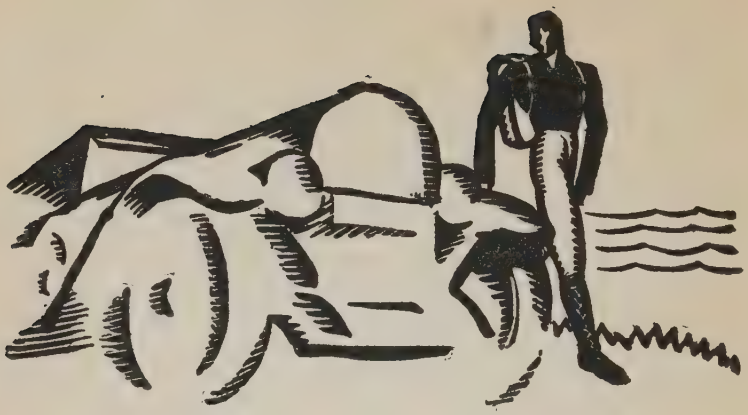
"What's wrong? You look sort of fed-up."

"I've been drinking 'smoke,' " he said in a dead monotone.

Some day I shall stand on the brink of Eternity and answer for my sins. I shall look into this Place I am told about in the Bible, and I shall say "So this is Hell" in exactly the same tone as that workman told me he had been drinking canned heat.

For a week he wandered in and out of the bar. He slept among the potato sacks and never washed or ate. He did every contemptible thing to get a drink, and one day he slumped into a corner and sat for hours without looking up or speaking.

Joe called me down to help Scotty drag the man outside. His heels made a twin track on the dirty floor. We propped him against the wall outside on the frosted sidewalk. An hour later a policeman poked him with his night-stick and he fell over . . . dead.



CHAPTER VIII

FROM AN ELEVATED POSITION

THE sun shone one day, and the wind that had blown up Main Street ever since I arrived in Buffalo dropped. The gandy dancers were clustering round the employment agencies with hungry eyes, and even our bums were talking of getting out of town on their annual tour of America.

"Say, Red, have you got any money?" Mac asked me. "I know where we could buy shares in a boxing tent."

I smiled genially; a little superior. In my jeans was a smug fifty dollars, and my feet were beginning to itch for a highway.

But Mac was nowhere in my plans. I had discovered

the get-rich-quick complex in my brother Scot, and I, too, am a Scot.

There had been the strait-jacket, and next a bright idea for a circus turn. Mac had followed this with patent medicines, then free-lance house-erecting, and a hundred other schemes. As far as I could make out, he was an equilibrist, a boxer, a wrestler, a buck dancer, a salesman, a builder, a doctor, and I expect some day he will put Niagara Falls to some new use; unless he jumps over them. A brilliant chap, Mac, but I am not ambitious. I declined to risk my wealth.

When I left Buffalo I went alone. Joe told me he considered me a fool, for my beer was beginning to earn a reputation. I had discovered things . . . for am I not the Artist, even in the making of home brew? But I was not to be coaxed.

> "There's a somethin' in me callin', and it ain't
> no good me stallin',
> When the Wanderlust is callin' I must go.
> Though it leads to—God knows where,
> Keep me moving, I don't care,
> When that calling, calling, calling bids me go."

So runs another poem of Sam's, and much though I regret the sop to popular favor that was beginning to permeate my brother artist's work since he got himself

an education from the Buffalo Public Library, I have to admit that he said a mouthful in that particular effusion. (Sam, by the way, was trying not to be sentimental any more. He told me it was not good Art.)

The ice was still on the lake, and the ground was still frozen when I stepped along the Lake highway with a swanky knapsack and a pair of high-laced boots. Maybe there was a better-dressed tramp in the world, but I couldn't see how. I was a super-tramp. So much so that when a comfortable-looking car pulled up and a gentleman asked me if I was going far, I tossed my second-hand knapsack into the back seat and said, "As a matter of fact I am on a walking-tour." Then added, "I am an English writer inspecting the United States."

The gentleman was impressed; I could see that, and I love making an impression. I watched my speech carefully and was vaguely technical when he asked me about the profession of letters.

"Where are you going? Anywhere in particular?" he asked.

"The Pacific," I said. "I am not sure whether I shall go into Canada from there, or Mexico. I may return to New York."

"Say, Mr.——"

"Kerr," I informed him. "Lennox Kerr."

"Well, Mr. Kerr, I'm going into Pittsburgh and then

through to my home town in Indiana, and I would like fine to have you travel with me. It's lonesome driving with no one to talk to, and I never pick up hoboes."

"No, of course not, they are a dirty tribe," I agreed, referring to the hoboes and forgetting how proudly I claimed brotherhood with the same dirty tribe a few weeks ago. "I would certainly like to travel with you, sir."

Thus commenced as nice a four-day companionship as I have ever spent. I quickly forgot I could not afford to pay two and a half dollars for a hotel room and a dollar a meal. Fifty dollars would last for ever.

Mr. Smith (which is not his name except symbolically) was what I chose to consider the typical middle-western American man of commerce.

He was traveling sales supervisor for a Chicago business house dealing in paints, and he was returning almost six hundred miles to spend the week-end with his family. I liked him from the moment he told me that.

He was a fresh, smartly dressed gentleman of forty-eight, and as naively eager to tell me about himself, his family, his home, his employer and his ideas as a boy. I advanced myself the literary recognition that will be mine in another five years' time, and we traveled as equals: two moderately successful men, sure of ourselves and knowing higher success inevitable.

Mr. Smith unburdened himself as we drove along the Lake Road to Erie, where we turned southward toward Pittsburgh.

His Great Idea (all Americans have a Great Idea) was a chain of lunch wagons across the West to the Pacific. He and I designed, built and laid as luxurious a chain of cheap eating wagons as could be found anywhere.

"Now, just about here," he would say, pointing to a cross-road, "we could put one in there."

I would consider the suggestion heavily. "I don't know, Smith. I should say wait another ten miles. . . . Ah, look—there is the very place!"

"Say, Kerr, that's a dandy spot. . . . Have you marked it?"

Solemnly I marked the road map, and another lunch wagon was erected. We would smile triumphantly to each other as we spread our chain, and I already felt myself a Coffee and Pie King.

"Say, Kerr. It would be dandy to work this idea out with you. . . . I haven't met a man I could spread my ideas out to as I can to you." My companion's voice was wistful; for he knew, just as I knew, that stern necessity had its foot too firmly on his neck to make the dream a reality.

"Why not?" I demanded. "When I'm finished with

this trip I shall visit you, and who knows?" I hate parting with dreams.

We discussed religion, and I discovered my friend was tolerant, but he hated Catholics and Jews. He told me to write and tell the Englishmen that they should keep the dollar spinning. "Look at me, Kerr," he said proudly, "I've got the nicest house in town, a good car, a five-hundred-dollar radio set, and high-grade furniture, but I haven't more'n a hundred dollars lying loose. . . . If I had, I would have a new car.

"As far as I can make out," he continued, "Englishmen save money and pay cash for their goods . . . the money is lying idle while they save enough to pay the whole amount at once. . . . That's poor business, Kerr. Pay a dollar, if that is all you got, and the rest when you have got it. Them goods might as well be in your house as in the maker's warehouse, and the maker can use that dollar better than you can. Keep the dollar spinning. . . . It's the best patriotism I know of."

Smith quoted his employer, Marshall Something-or-Other, as I would quote Shakespeare . . . or will, when I make myself an education. If Marshall said it, then that went. Henry Ford was a sort of lesser deity in my friend's eyes.

I found this almost ridiculous belief in the Divine Right of Employers in every part of America. In New

York I worked over twelve hours a day, carrying heavy furniture, for a wage about equivalent to thirty-five shillings a week in England, and I never heard a grumble among my workmates. Our boss was spoken of with a real affection and admiration, though I never saw him speak to one workman. To me, whose code is that employees and employers must serve each other and keep their distinctive places, this almost fervent loyalty to employers is the healthiest thing in American life.

Now, Mr. Smith was showing me that it existed in the higher grade of employee also. I would have liked my clean, intelligent, simple-minded traveling salesman to give a lecture to British Trade Unionists.

Apart from his own particular business and his family, my companion was almost an illiterate. He knew something about local politics, but was vague on national problems. Of international politics he was completely ignorant. Later, I was to travel with a well-spoken farmer who thought Scotland was an island.

Smith told me he was a picture fan because he could learn about foreign countries from the films. As most of the foreign countries he saw there were manufactured in Hollywood, he had a quaint series of mind-pictures of the world.

But he soaked up information like a sponge. He reminded me of an Australian back-blocks boy who kept

my mind tangled for a week asking such questions as, "How can Germans understand each other if they talk different from us?" "If there are five million people in London, how do they manage to hang the telephone wires on one pole?" "Who is the best cricketer in England?" "Have you seen Harry Lauder?" "Have you seen the King, and does he wear his crown in bed?" "Was it real gold?" and "I bet it marks his forehead and hurts like hell!"

Smith, of course, believed that King George spent most of his time wearing gold crowns and putting his foot on his subjects' necks. I told him jokingly that Englishmen always lie down on their faces when any member of the royal family passes, but I saw he was prepared to take even that seriously, and I apologized and explained Magna Charta and the British Constitution. But I don't think he believed all I said. Kings are kings, and America has had some in her time. As the United States is the one nation that has not progressed in the learning about other countries during its existence, the popular idea about royalty is the same as it was three hundred years ago. Americans feel rather sorry for us in our servitude.

"Look how King George taxes automobiles in Canada," they will say in irrefutable argument, and it is not the slightest bit of good telling them that King George

is a kindly gentleman for whom even our communists have an affection. He is a king, and kings are taught to put their heel on poor folks' necks.

Mr. Smith carried me into Pittsburgh, where we spent two days, and the greater part of my fifty dollars. I like playing a part well, and Smith and I spent our time trying to out-courtesy each other.

From Pittsburgh we crossed Ohio—a glorious run through the hills overlooking the muddy Ohio River, and across the rolling flats to Indiana.

I left Smith at Fort Wayne. He wanted me to go on with him and spend a week with his family, but I had nine dollars remaining, and I knew I would have to find another job somewhere.

By explaining that my tour *must* include the Great Lakes, I excused myself, and we parted—he to go to the "nicest house in town" and "a growing up family," I to find a fifty-cent doss-house and shake myself clear of my "moderately successful traveler" mentality. I was once more a hobo.

CHAPTER IX

A SAILOR'S PARADISE

"How should a man help it, when his heart goes jigging
To the sea song and the sail's song and the wind through the rigging?"
—C. Fox Smith.

As a matter of fact, my new ship had only a small stump for hanging flags on, and I doubt if any of her crew knew much about sails. They were, I admit, expertly conversant with most makes of automobiles, and had as snappy a taste in shirts and ties as I have seen outside Broadway. The sea-song, if my memory serves me well, was *Red Hot Mama* at the time I joined the Great Lakes Freighter *Lynford E. Geer* at Toledo.

The berth came along just when it was needed. The last of my ill-gotten fifty dollars had been gone forty-

eight hours when I was offered a porter's berth on the freighter. I was sitting reviling myself in the Lake Carriers' Association Hall at Toledo; calling myself all kinds of fools for throwing over a brilliant career as a writer, to wander about as I was doing. From a distance of four thousand miles, I could see that London was anxiously waiting for my masterpieces, and I was in a hurry to return and claim success. Also, I was beginning to desire success for its own sake since I saw a newspaper picture of Trader Horn kissing two Ziegfeld *Follies* girls.

"Any porters here?"

We all looked up as the Association official shouted. Although there were about a hundred men sitting on the benches round the walls of the hall, no one rose. I waited, wondering what a porter was. The official shouted again, and I rose.

"Will I do?"

"Been on the boats before?"

"Deep-water for ten years."

"Huh!" He faced the hall again. "Any *porters* here?" Silence.

"I guess I'll just *have* to send you. . . . Where's your book? . . . All right; go to the *Lynford E. Geer* and tell the steward you are the best I could do in a hurry. . . . I don't expect he'll have you."

The steward of the freighter was as frank, when I presented myself, dusty and tired after a six-mile walk along the riverside to where the vessel lay.

"You look like a bum to me," he told me, "and I said I wanted a man who had been on ships before. . . . This ain't a college." (Knowing something about departmental rivalry on board ships, I had denied any sort of sailoring experience to the steward.)

"Give me a try, anyhow?" I asked. "You can see how I shape before the ship sails to-morrow."

He pointed to a pail full of potatoes. "All right. Get a knife and start on that lot." He surveyed my high boots and dirty khaki drill trousers. "You got any clothes?"

"They are on. . . . I had to peddle my outfit."

He took a blue apron from a nail and tossed it to me. "Here put that on and hide the muck."

Two days later, he came to me and said he did not believe I had no experience. In the third week he offered me the second cook's berth, which I accepted. About this time I confessed that I had sailed as cook on several vessels, as well as A. B., bo'sun, and second officer. He forgave me the disgrace of having been a deck-hand, and said I would make a pretty good cook if I learned tricks.

So I entered Paradise.

Paradise to a sailor is a stretch of water that is always smooth, containing ships that are in port every two or three days, and on board which jam pie and bacon and eggs are the staple diet. The Great Lakes is even more generous than that; for, added to the remarkably fine feeding and comfortable berths, sailors are permitted to smoke at the wheel, and an almost communistic principle exists in the system of A. B.'s and officers (including the captain) sharing the same table. And curiously enough, the ships do not sink from such revolutionary arrangements, and the master is respected and obeyed by his men. To a sailor this is an intensely interesting form of ship's discipline, and to a worker who has a sincere belief in the common sense of his own kind it is a satisfactory proof of the complete idiocy of the exaggerated homage given to shipmasters on deep-water vessels.

The conditions of forecastle hands is a subject very dear to me and, I hope, to all other writers who have graduated from before the mast. The average landsman lacks all true interest in sailors; an amazing truth, considering that seafarers made Britain and America the mighty nations they both are. Sea writers, if they wanted to make a living from their writings, or from an incomprehensible romanticism, have adorned every dirty, hungry ship with a halo of romance and have manned

them with bluff, hearty, Yo-ho sailors who tear one another's faces to small pieces after the second glass of rum. (It is always rum.)

This halo of romance has helped in no small way to deprive seamen of the public sympathy that is necessary for the success of any labor reform. Being called a hero is a poor substitute for life's comforts.

Sailors, actually, are fairly decent, respectable working men in need of a few of the labor reforms so hysterically demanded for their less necessitous brothers in other safer trades on shore. The men themselves dare not refuse to work under whatever conditions exist on a vessel, for mutiny is an ugly word; scattered as the members of the profession are it is impossible for them to organize properly; and, because when they have been trained for a sea life they are utterly useless for anything else, they must continue at sea if they want to eat and rear families.

If landsmen had not insisted on having their fiction seafarers served up as per the original thrilling sample, and writers had not weakly complied with the demand, by glorifying every unfair hardship, seamen would not now be eating the same salt horse that was served to Nelson's heroes, or living in unhealthy forecastles that are the reason for the percentage of consumptives among sailors being higher than in any other profes-

sion. Any merchant seaman will bear me out when I state that conditions on the majority of tramp steamers to-day, with the exception of most United States and Canadian companies and all Australian shipping, are little better than they were fifty years ago. The little improvement can be credited to the man who invented steam, for it is only the shortening of the ships' voyages that has banished from the sea scurvy and the other sicknesses caused by ill-kept and poorly cooked food.

In this chapter I am going to grind an ax, by holding up as a magnificent example to all shipowners in every part of the world the conditions under which the Great Lakes seamen work. To any one not interested . . . I re-commence jesting in the next chapter.

Let me start with food. On British tramp steamers, porridge, without milk (one small tin of condensed milk is allowed to each man once every three weeks for *all* purposes), a watery stew known as wet hash, and chicory coffee that has been stewed to bitterness make up the most frequently recurring breakfast. On German ships sweetened rice or macaroni with coffee and bread is considered a breakfast. On the Great Lakes, the usual morning meal consists of fruit, a choice of cereals (with as much milk as any one wants), bacon and eggs, coffee, several kinds of bread, butter (the other ships I knew served a margarine that had pungency if nothing else),

and plain cake to fill in the corners. All other meals could be similarly compared. Against the salt-water sailors' three such meals a day, Lakes seamen get four.

The steward of the *Lynford E. Geer* was instructed to call at the owner's office while I was on board the freighter. He was informed by the superintendent that his cost of catering per man was the lowest in the fleet, and was, figuratively, patted on the back. He returned on board uttering curses.

"What's the trouble?" I inquired.

He told me what had been said to him by his satisfied employer.

"Then, why are you making a noise?" I asked. "You should be feeling proud of yourself. . . . The crew reckon this is one of the best fed ships on the Lakes."

"What!" he demanded. "Proud of spending eighty cents a day on a man when others are getting one dollar five cents? . . . Say, you watch me!"

We had early strawberries and ice-cream with every meal after that until the crew were sick of the sight of them.

I am not advocating such excessive luxuries, for I know salt-water sailors can get along without strawberries and ice-cream. But when I saw this incident, I remembered the bonus that is given to stewards of British ships if they succeed in keeping their catering bills

under a certain figure; and the steward of the *Lynford E. Geer* was not questioned as to why his bills jumped up. In a similar occurrence anywhere but on the Great Lakes the steward would never have done another trip for the same company. It is a bitter truth.

The astounding comparison between Lakes and salt-water sailoring applies to accommodation.

Some shipping companies are now berthing the men in small cabins that hold three to four men, and supplying a mess-room in addition. Germany was one of the first to give such accommodation, American ships are mostly fitted like this, British companies have built a few ships with these cabins, but the great majority of the world's seamen are quartered in large general forecastles, where they sleep, eat and pass their spare moments without any privacy whatever.

Most forecastles are unspeakable, and even the smaller cabins are less comfortable than a modern prison cell. The only furniture is wooden benches and deal tables. The decking is uncovered concrete. The steel hull plates of the vessels are the walls. A ship not "lousy" is something to ring bells for. Oil lamps still exist, and grumbling rewards any request for globe renewals. The sanitary arrangements are of the crudest.

With the exception of American, Canadian and Australian ships, the men supply their own bedding and

eating utensils. Usually, and always on British cargo vessels, no arrangements are made for keeping crews' quarters clean, except at the discretion of the captain. The unwritten rule is to allow an ordinary seaman two hours every Saturday for that purpose. During the rest of the week, the ordinary seamen have to keep the places as tidy as is possible in their own time. No imagination is required to picture the state of a thirty-foot-long compartment on Fridays, after a crew has moved about it for a week. In damp weather the deck is slippery with slime.

On the Great Lakes, seamen are berthed in rooms for two men. The walls are paneled. The floor has linoleum and matting. Each cabin has a writing desk, a wash-stand basin, cane armchairs and roomy cupboards. Clean white bed-sheets are supplied once a week, and towels and soap are given whenever asked for, within reason. Instead of having to stand in a drafty lavatory or a small, steel-walled, concrete-floored wash-room and bathe from a bucket, as in most ships I have known, Lakes seamen have well-equipped bathrooms. The mess-rooms are handsome places; there are white table-cloths, and I saw three porters sent packing for not having the plates and cutlery shining.

The duties of the porters are to keep the men's cabins clean (and I mean *clean*), wait on them at meals, wash

dishes and assist the cook. Many a good hotel gives no better service than that the Great Lakes seaman gets.

I could keep on comparing for the remainder of this book, but what little I have shown is sufficient for all intelligent purposes.

"And now," demands the dividend sharer, "is it good business to give all these luxuries to seamen?"

I refer you to the owners of the freighters. As far as I know they are not in business for their health, and as they still remain in business, I can only conclude that it *is* sound business. I do know that they get a greater return from their employees than is received by any owner of salt-water vessels.

Seamen, strange though it may appear, are very much like human beings, and human beings are mostly decent. Lakes seamen have been given conditions that would arouse all this natural decency. They recognize they are getting fair treatment, and they work more steadily and for longer hours than their brothers outside. Watch-keepers on board Lakes freighters keep up a continual six hours on, six hours off, in and out of harbor during the whole of the nine months in the year in which the Lakes are navigable.

Human beings, including seamen, are also human. Salt-water seamen do not get fair treatment, and lacking the right to protest like free men, they descend to petty

tricks to "dodge." Every voyage is a continual striving by the men to "get to windward of the owners," and by the officers to get as much as they can from the men.

"Sailors would grumble if they got twenty-four hours in their bunks and a thousand pounds a year" is as good a lie as I have heard, in spite of its popularity among even the men it insults. In all the time I associated with them, I never heard one Great Lakes seaman grouse, and they, too, are but common clay.

The owners of these Lakes vessels help the men to achieve results by fitting their ships with modern labor-saving devices. As example: sliding, steel hatch covers and a system of opening them enable a crew to have their vessel ready for loading or discharging her cargo in less than a tenth of the time it would take to strip off the wooden hatches of the average tramp. That is sound business, as well as being safer for men and ship, and it is only one of many clever ideas used on these inland waters. I could list dozens, but I am supposed to amuse and interest.

Naturally, being a seafarer, I find pleasure in seeing my shipmates (and myself) eating good food, living in quarters that are fit for free citizens, and having our work made lighter by intelligent inventions. And being a worker who believes employers should make a profit, I am glad that giving these comforts to their crews has

proved sound policy to Great Lakes shipowners. But mostly I think of these things with bitterness and joy. Joy because some one has done this for the men, bitterness because I know it will be a long time before the world gives other sailors similar conditions.

It is in the characters of the men that the real value of fair treatment is proved. The Great Lakes seaman is one of the finest specimens of working man in the world. I would even say he is the ideal worker, physically, morally and in intelligence.

One has to admit that these "sweet-water sailors" are not, judged by deep-water standards, sailors. The second mate of the *Lynford E. Geer* would not have made a good ordinary seaman on an outside tramp, and the officers, generally, are more ship-handlers than navigators.

My sea-soul was pained when I noticed the eye-splices in the mooring ropes were drawing out, and I shuddered at some of the knots and hitches that passed muster. Nor did I enjoy hearing a shipmate say that there was another vessel "in front" of us. I have been told that some Great Lakes steamboat officers put out their hand when they are turning to port or starboard, but I think that is a salt-water joke. Certainly there is an easy-going attitude in the matter of ships passing one another, and I saw many things done that would

have been rewarded by a canceled certificate anywhere else. Lakes seamen are rather proud of the fact that they are not sailors, and I assure them they have every cause to be so.

But sailoring on the Great Lakes (I refer to the technique of the profession) is entirely different from that on any other waters, and comparison is useless. The Lakesmen know their own problems and have evolved suitable methods. I saw some impressive handling of the long awkward *Lynford E. Geer* while I was on board; and (this will be intelligible to any sailor) although we were alongside quays almost every third day, I never once saw a fender put over the side.

As individuals, Lakes seamen are a different type from salt-water seafarers; and while I admit the necessity for the difference in working methods, I see no reason why this difference in character should be.

These inland sailors work nine months every year, and their pay is good. An A. B. gets one hundred and five dollars a month, besides his keep. Being familiar with comfort on board his vessel, he does not experience the very understandable need to go crazy with his money in a search for some change in his form of living,—the explanation for salt-water sailors' extravagance on shore. The "Laker" usually has a tidy bank account, encouraged by various schemes of his employ-

ers, and if he does not want to do other work during the few months the Lakes are frozen over he need not.

I have heard people, who think they know, say that if a shipowner puts good fittings in a crew's quarters the men destroy them. This is a brutal lie. Only the very lowest mentality is incapable of taking pride in a good home. And sailors are certainly not of the lowest mentality. Great Lakes seamen have proved how false is this accusation by lifting themselves to their surroundings. They are proud of their cleanliness, and it would go hard with any man who came unwashed to a meal. The conditions have aroused every natural decency, and Lakes seamen are scrupulously clean in their habits. So might salt-water men be, but they are not. It is no crime on a tramp to spit on the deck in the forecastle.

Decent comfort breeds bodily cleanliness, and bodily cleanliness breeds moral cleanliness and intelligence. The Laker talks of baseball, dances, comes on board at a sensible hour, sober, and seldom finds pleasure in prostitutes or smutty jokes. He is in every sense of the words "a decent working man"; not so interesting or amusing to the seeker after sensational copy for fiction (and as proof of taste in sea literature a magazine specializing in sea stories in the United States is always putting in vain pleas for Lakes stories that are seldom

forthcoming) but certainly a much better citizen than he would be if he were not treated so fairly. Maybe some day the world will see the value of conditions that make such citizens.

Salt-water sailors who come to the Lakes seldom remain long, and that is not the least bitter discovery. Their ways are not the ways of the Laker. They have grumbled and dodged for so long that they can not lose the habit, and they become unpopular with the quieter inland seamen. Is it not horrible to know that a man can get so used to Hell that he is not fit for a place in Paradise? Is it not pitiful?

"Now, William, you may remove the soap-box, and hand me my cap-and-bells again."

CHAPTER X

THE READER MAY SETTLE AGAIN

HERE I was, then, reveling in luxury. My work as second cook was pleasant. I had plenty of time to spend in my favorite occupation of sitting around and thinking about the masterpieces I should write some day, or just sitting. I was on board a ship, which is always a joy to me, and on water that was skirted by the most beautiful of shores, seldom out of sight. Life was just one continuous soft armchair, and I was content to dream my dreams and learn the art of doing a succulent steak to a turn.

One evening as I lay stretched out on top of a hatch, watching a deep blue world of sky and water edged by

the dark bulk of the shore, where tall pines stood like sentinels watching the day pass, I thought that some day I would write a novel about an ambitious man. He would rise to eminence in the world's affairs . . . maybe I would make him a prime minister or president of the United States, I was too lazy to think out details. He would find himself on a Great Lakes freighter, somehow . . . perhaps I would make him experience temporary defeat and seek seclusion while he planned his next rise to power. Power was to be his spur in life. His desire for omnipotence had lifted him above the common herd and made him the great man he was.

Bitterly he had come into the peace of the Lakes to soothe disturbed nerves . . . or something like that.

A snow-white gull floated past the ship at that moment, and my novel was paused while I watched the bird hover over the water, stretch its long legs like a bather testing the water, then settle gracefully into the blue surface. I watched the ripples roll lazily away from the gull as the ship steamed past the spot. The gull was startlingly white on the evening water, and the world was blue . . . the blueness saturated it like a liquid until I ached to put its beauty into words. Today I look at my diary and find, "Blue, blue, blue, the white spot of the gull. Blue, blue, blue, BLUE! I can see a white house with a bright red roof among the blue

trees, and the sky is blue, bluer than blue"—but I don't need any critic to tell me that is not the correct way to describe evenings.

I finished my novel on another evening, when the *Lynford E. Geer* was steaming through Georgian Bay in Lake Huron.

The last wintry mist was clinging to the branches of the pines as we passed Flower-pot Island. A light breeze was trying to clear the pest so that the highest trees could look at us, but the mist dragged at the trees with long lacy fingers and would not be driven away. It is like a vapory octopus, I thought, as I watched. I could imagine the hidden trees shaking themselves and crying to the mist to let them show themselves, for pines are the vainest of all trees. "Hi, beat it," they would be shouting to the mist. "There is a guy down there who will tell the world about our beauty . . . chase off and let him have a look at us!"

But I am mostly amused by pine trees. I put them into stories and describe them as grand and stately, but I only do that because readers expect it. I know a pine that stands on the end of a tongue of land near Tiffin, Ontario. The other trees on this strip of country are poplars, but the pine will not associate with them. He stands apart from them, right on the edge of the water; and at night, when the silvery poplars are gleaming in

the dusk, he looks like some sullen old killjoy standing in solitary dignity watching a group of young girls with their heads together giggling and chattering. I often get a smile from this picture, for grand and stately people are always amusing.

My eminent statesman, if I would make him a statesman, would find all these beautiful things when he came to the Lakes, and they would get hold of him as they were gripping me.

He would wish he could live here for ever, just cooking bacon and beefsteaks. But he would be driven by his desire for power, and he would get restless at times.

Then one day he would be promoted to chief cook, and the captain and the crew would talk to him as though he were a god, and he would be absolute master of the ship. There would come to him, as he turned a sausage over in the frying-pan, a newer and truer interpretation of power. He had just to take that sausage out of the frying-pan half a minute too soon or too late and he would blast a man's happiness for a day. The Seeker after Power would laugh then, and the world would know him never again. He would have learned a great lesson and achieved a greater power than he had ever possessed as prime minister or president . . . or whatever I made him . . . he would be a cook on board a ship. Than whom there is no mightier.

Only one thing marred the peace of my life as second cook on the *Lynford E. Geer.* I became the victim of a hundred-per-cent. American.

Every time this man passed me he would shout: "How is King George this morning?" "Hi, the Prince of Wales fell off his horse yesterday." His comments on Great Britain and its royal family were usually insulting.

I did not mind a great deal at first. I have heard too many silly Britishers criticize and insult other nations to blame this American. Also, I did not consider that either the British nation or King George would care very much what this Great Lakes seaman said about them; so why should I? Arguing about countries is a foolish form of amusement that I always avoid, but it is, unfortunately, too prevalent in both the United States and Great Britain.

Once I heard an American marine say that one American was as good as five Englishmen. I was going to ask him to prove it, when I suddenly remembered hearing more than one Englishman say that any Englishman could fight five Frenchmen or twenty negroes. . . . So I laughed instead.

I maintained a more or less dignified attitude toward the humorist on this occasion, but I began to see the other men were watching me covertly when he made

his wise-cracks. The limit was reached one evening when a young boy told the seaman to "leave Scotty alone." It dawned on me suddenly that my personal reputation was getting mixed up in this matter.

To find Paradise and then have its pleasures spoiled by a bread-crumb was irritating. I must put a stop to this annoyance.

I did not care to go the length of asking the man on the hatch. Had I fought him because of his antagonism to Great Britain, I would immediately have become "that quarreling Englishman," and in my small way I wish to foster a feeling of friendliness among the working men of the two nations. Suddenly I hit on an idea.

I began to jerk the back of his shirt out of his trousers every time I passed him.

He would greet me with a broad smile and, "How's King George this morning?"

I would grin equally good-humoredly, then as he passed I would jerk his shirt. Neither of us committed the unforgivable sin of losing our tempers, outwardly, and so did not earn the name of being trouble-makers.

After three days of shirt-jerking he began to avoid me, and in a week I was left in peace. There is nothing so horribly irritating as the humorous habit of jerking shirts up. If he had worn a coat and a collar and tie, I could have achieved the same effect by pulling his tie

out of his waistcoat. And of course all hands would have howled him down if he had bawled me out for such a harmless joke. King George was not mentioned again, and the seaman and I became the best of friends.

Then one day, when the ship was lying in Manitowoc, Wisconsin, I counted my money and discovered I possessed one hundred and twenty dollars. Far too much money to continue working.

CHAPTER XI

THE FOOLISHNESS OF IT

"How can a man help it, when the God that made him,
Set his feet to follow where the four winds bade him?"
—C. Fox Smith.

Was there any such thing as Wanderlust, I ruminated, as I walked out of Manitowoc, Wisconsin, at five o'clock one summer morning. The house dogs heard my feet breaking the silence, and they gave me a tramp's farewell with angry tongues.

I knew I was doing a foolish thing in leaving the Lakes freighter. I had been happy and contented there; I was saving money, and when the ice closed the Lakes to shipping for the winter I would have enough saved to go to New York and write peacefully until the spring.

Yesterday I had had no idea of leaving the vessel. True, I had often thought I would like to cross the continent to the Pacific, as I had originally planned; but regular meals and a soft bed had knocked some of that nonsense out of me. Or so I had thought. Now, today, I was tramping along a highway when I could have afforded a train fare, just because I had a crazy idea I wanted to see a place called Watersmeet.

Was this the Wanderlust? I had read poems and stories about that romantic disease, but I did not feel romantic as I trudged along the lonely highway. I was mostly annoyed with myself. Scotch common sense was telling me I was a damned fool, and advising me to return to the ship. Joe, the chief cook, would be glad to see me back, for we had become good mates, and he was going to help me get a job as chief cook on another ship.

It isn't that I like highways; I see no beauty in a countryside, and any sort of land takes on charm only when I am viewing it from the water. I can see beauty, even glory, in the sea, but the most delicately colored flower leaves me cold. Why, then, do I set out on this idiotic journey, I thought that day.

The Wanderlust? I had seldom heard it mentioned as such among the men I had met up with in different parts of the world. A man might say he was going to

pull out, and confess that he had a fancy to see some distant place; I have even heard a man confess to "itchy feet," but it was a subject for novelists who traveled "passenger," not tramps.

Not long since I was walking through the Green Park, returning to my lodgings for tea. I had been selling ladies' two-piece suits to Mayfair "Madames" all afternoon, and I had had a good day's business. My main thought was tea.

Happening to look behind me, I saw a glow in the sky, and I paused with something like amusement to watch the sun set behind the Piccadilly clubs. I so seldom see either a sunset or a sunrise now, and for years they had been my greatest joy and the supreme test of my writing. I had decided that the day I could describe faithfully the beauties of a sunset I could consider myself a writer. I have long since given up hope of achieving the impossible, and approach such tasks humbly.

This evening in the Green Park I watched the skies with the sensation of meeting an old and dear friend who understood me. The drab roofs were being tinted a blood-red that glowed, the small clouds were drifting together as though seeking company for the lonely night, and the sun was swelling itself behind the buildings and filling the whole world with its warm coloring. I ceased

to smile, and felt a sudden longing to run toward Piccadilly and climb up the face of the buildings there and watch the glorious coloring die.

I was thinking of water; unending surface that glittered and glowed, of deep green shadows and emotional blue. The longing to watch that sun go down surged through me like passion for a woman. I wanted to shout to the black stream of people on the path to turn and look. Pale faces these people seemed to have after looking at the depthless red, faces that seemed to cry, "Tea and ledgers! Tea and ledgers!" If I could only forget such a thing as ambition existed! To lie on a ship's deck and bathe in that redness and feel the evening air flowing into my nostrils and cleaning my lungs.

The sky darkened and the roofs became drab gray again; the clouds were massed together and obscuring the sun-glow. It tried to spread out beyond them, but night had come.

I sat down on a park chair, my chest rising and falling with emotion. I discovered my fingers had loosened my collar stud and my neck was bare. Then I had a feeling of horror as I realized that if that fascination had continued for another ten minutes I would never have taken tea in London that evening: I would have been begging rides on the road to some seaport where shipping was good; with no other thought but anger at

what I was doing, yet I would have been unable to turn back to sanity and the work that was gradually achieving my ambitions. Just as I had walked along the road from Manitowoc, just as I have walked along roads in many countries, seeing no beauty in them, hating the dust and the hardness of them, learning nothing on them, but answering the call of this cursed thing novelists have named the Wanderlust, this romantic disease that strips a man of all self-respect, loses him his friends and his home, and makes of him the most complete of all forms of fool.

I reached Green Island at eleven o'clock the night of the day I left the Lakes freighter. Except for a short lift of five miles in a farmer's car, I walked the whole of the thirty miles, and my feet were sore.

Too tired even to eat, I went to a hotel and slept like a log. The next morning my feet were swollen, and I had to rest for another day. After my long rest on the Lakes freighter I had attempted too much.

I sat around the hotel like a sulking child all that day. I was impatient to be off again, and wild at myself for this restlessness. I argued on a hundred different reasons for not going, but I knew all the time I argued with myself that I would be on the highway the next day. I had walked ten miles before eight o'clock; hurrying like a man bent on some important errand, instead

of a fool bound for a spot on a map, and with no excuse except an idle idea that a place named Watersmeet must be worth seeing.

As is usual on such occasions, when the first bitter denunciation was over and I had begun to laugh at myself, I began to build my future as I walked along.

While I was in New York I had a brilliant literary career all mapped out; in the speakeasy I thought I would be a rum-runner or a reformer of reformers; with Mr. Smith I had visions of myself as a successful business man with a family; on the Great Lakes I had decided I would become the best cook on the Lakes. Now I thought I would remain a Wanderer.

I would not bother about ambitions any more. Better realize that I was a fool and would remain one. I found my way to the banks of the Wolf River and sat watching the water racing past.

If I cared to, I could be a great writer, or a great cook, or politician, or captain of industry . . . I would put my finger to my nose at such things and be a tramp. Not an ordinary tramp, of course; I would be the sort of tramp that books are written about.

I would read Shakespeare and ask for my bread and butter in classical English, with an occasional Latin phrase dropped in to make an effect. Housewives would stare when I bowed and asked for "a modicum of sus-

taining nourishment" as "the inner man was weary of inactivity," or thanked them for stale steak pie with a "*pax vobiscum.*" I liked the picture I was drawing so much that I rose and bowed to a tree as I rehearsed my approach as a tramp of wit and talent.

Some rich and beautiful lady would fall in love with me, and I would try to settle down, perhaps. But a sunset would call me, and I would part with my happiness. Suddenly I thought what a dandy novel I was making up, and the writer began to take charge. I took out my note-book and wrote:

THE PRICE OF A SUNSET
A Novel
by
LENNOX KERR

Then I laughed. Who wouldn't?

I hurried back to the highway to find a lift. I wanted to find a nice comfortable hotel where I could sit down and start my new novel.

CHAPTER XII

I RESUME MY ELEVATION—AND FALL

If it were only possible to lift off the top of the human skull like a lid, and take out the completed novel, done up in a neat parcel, how perfect an author's life would be, and what magnificent works of art the world would have on its shelves.

Or better still, that the world would recognize the similarity between dreamers and the delicate lilies, and treat them as they treat these flowers. In the Perfect World there would be a reserve of beautiful grassland, speckled with shady trees and placed beside a stretch of water. There any one who was smitten with the creating disease could go (or be forcibly incarcerated), to

lie on the grass all day and evolve his creations and never be expected to place them on paper or canvas.

Here is a fascinating idea for a novel (perhaps I will write it some day): The Land of the Unwritten. Surely the very elements would assist in perfecting such a heaven! And perhaps the world would live to congratulate itself on its generosity.

But I suspect the place would be overcrowded. I like to believe that every one could dream an epic poem or a great novel and that genius is merely the vanity that forces expression.

These were my thoughts the day I walked through the Menominee Indian Reservation in Wisconsin.

My tramp novel had not been written.

I stopped at a general store in the reservation village and bought some bread and cheese. A stout Indian woman served me, and seemed inclined to chat. I was perfectly willing.

"You ain't an American," she said.

"No, I am Scotch," I told her, expecting she would think Scotland was a Mexican village or the capital of Germany. Not a bit of it.

"Say, that's funny," she said proudly. "Me, I'm Scotch too."

I surveyed her overflowing bulk and her oily complexion with some surprise.

"Scotch?"

"Sure," she answered happily. "One of my folks was a Major Stewart . . . 'way back it was, but my granny remembered him fine."

Major Stewart! Major Stewart! And your king sent you over here to fight, I thought. Was this gallant Scot the hero of that novel I read, where a pretty squaw died of a broken heart in the last chapter?

When I left the village and walked down the forest-lined highway, I reenacted the romance of Major Stewart of the Umpteenth Highlanders, and the daughter of Chief Great Bear of the Menominees.

Our amorous soldier surely chose the ideal background for his love-making. I walked across a bridge over a falls that was made for lovers' meetings. I followed a highway through forest land full of hidden corners and lovers' beds of moss and flowers. I envied Major Stewart, and felt lonely.

It was this Indian Reservation that made me think of a reserve for dreamers; for it was just such a place.

Originally, each adult male Indian in America was given a small grant of land by the United States Government. Generosity somewhat similar to that of the bully who steals the small boy's apple and then offers his victim a bite; typical white man justice.

A few energetic Indians had cleared their land and

I saw one or two untidy farms near the highway, but most of the land remained in its virgin state. The gardeners of my Dreamers' Reserve would be American Indians; they take it for granted that Nature knows best, and leave it to her. I passed several suitable gardeners of the right sort. They looked up and said, " 'Lo," and turned over on the other side.

I would have liked to turn off the highway and explore some of the reservation forest land, but I had very little food with me, and the tangled underbrush was a treacherous maze for unlearned feet. I paused and looked into the shadowy places enviously, and when a worn cart-track did appear I turned down it eagerly.

The track looked as though it had not been used in years, for the old wheel ruts were overgrown with grass. The road turned sharply, and the main highway might have been a thousand miles away, so still was the forest.

Would I meet a redskin chief in his war-paint and armed with bow and arrow? Although I have at different times in my wandering life found myself in many queer places, I have never lost that thrilling fear of my boyhood for lonely roads and dark rooms. Much of my time in London is spent in poking into Limehouse corners, and I am persona grata with as choice a collection of East-End worthies as any detective thriller could wish

for; yet I often wait for the slither of a slipper and the flash of an upheld knife as I walk along the pavements of harmless, libeled Chinatown. I would not part with this delicious fear for a Victoria Cross.

So, on the reservation track, it was easy to imagine a ferocious redskin lurking behind each tree, and myself as Major Stewart bound a-trysting with my pretty squaw.

I must be wary. Chief Great Bear has sworn to scalp the paleface who has bespoiled his wigwam. And young Red Deer (are there red deer in America?) is afire with jealousy. I picture the sullen brown face of my rival, and a cynical smile twists the ends of my full-formed lips.

Am I afraid of these dogs? No! Gallant British officer that I am. I stop and deliberately flick a speck of dust from my handsome red tunic. My fear is gone now, and I am the arrogant Highlander.

I expected that stream. A road such as I followed must end in such a stream.

I crossed a bridge whose timbers were bleached with sun and rain, and with a large jagged hole in its surface. Leaning on the rotting rail I looked eagerly toward where the stream disappeared among the trees.

The world was still, like a cathedral, except for the gurgling of the water round the stones. Promptly I

named the stream Minnehaha, the only Indian word I knew.

The water was so clear that I could see the green reeds bent over by the swift stream. A trout leaped there! and I forgot my squaw and the lurking Indians. I must catch a fish.

My pockets produced a piece of string, a pin, a small pellet of bread for bait, and I found a piece of a branch for a rod. I rigged my tackle together and walked along the stream, until I came to a mossy promontory. There I tried my luck.

It was fascinating sport. Doubly so as I had never fished in my life before. I got so interested in it that I followed the stream deeper and deeper into the leaf-roofed forest. But I saw no more trout in that beautiful water, though I stepped quietly and peered under every overhanging ledge of moss. I was awakened by the howl of a motor horn, and when I looked up I discovered I was standing in the shadow of a concrete bridge over the main highway. Regretfully I tossed my rod and line away and climbed to the highway and common sense again.

I rode into the next town with a young clergyman who was anxious to know if America was profiting by its prosperity, and, having asked me what I thought about it and accepted my "I guess so" with scorn,

treated me to a masterly speech from which I understood that America was not. I said, "What a shame!" and he looked at me suspiciously.

Watersmeet proved disappointing when I arrived there four days after I left Manitowoc, and it did not even have an expensive hotel.

I was living high these days. My hundred dollars made me reckless, and I traveled in my favorite rôle of the English writer. The night I arrived in Watersmeet I had eighty dollars remaining, and was disappointed when I was informed that my room was to cost only a dollar for the night. I could not see how any one could believe I was a successful author at that price.

After a wash and the most expensive meal the hotel could supply (though I fancied a plateful of pork and beans, but thought I would lose prestige by asking for it), I went into the "office" and sat wondering where I would go next.

There were several other persons in the room. A huge man in mackinaw and high boots, who, I learned, was a camp foreman, a half-drunk individual with one blind eye, and a short stout man who wore an old gray suit and a soiled stiff collar and tie. This stout man sat and beamed across at me for a short time, and suddenly he crossed to where I sat.

"Dead hole this, ain't it?" he opened.

"It is all that," I said, then added: "Where do the waters meet?"

He was puzzled for a minute, then he laughed, rolling back and forward on his chair in merriment.

"Waters meet! Hell, that's a good one! Where do the waters meet . . . Watersmeet . . . ha, ha!"

I saw the camp foreman look across almost pityingly, and the one-eyed gentleman leaned his head to one side as though to center the remaining eye, and surveyed the stout man solemnly.

"Haw, haw, haw . . . hell, that's a good one! . . . Where do the waters meet . . . Watersmeet." The little stout man held his sides and looked at me with tears in his eyes. "Hell, I can't stop now! . . . Haw, haw, haw!"

The camp foreman met my eye, and we both smiled. The single eye of the remaining man twinkled suddenly, and he opened his mouth.

"Ha, ha, ha! . . . Say, whatinhell are you laughin' at . . . ha, ha?"

"Oh, cripes! I can't stop laffin." The stout man almost rolled off the bench. "Haw, haw, haw! Haw, haw, haw!"

I could hold my gravity no longer. The foreman joined in before I had got started, and the four of us sat there, laughing until our sides ached.

"Say, what the hell *are* you laughing at?" the camp foreman demanded when we were all exhausted.

The little man hooked a thumb toward me.

"It's him," he panted. "He wants to know where the waters meet . . . Watersmeet . . . see?"

The huge woodman rose from his seat and looked at me scornfully.

"Say, that's a hell of a silly joke. You're both crazy."

He stalked out of the room, and the stout man and I looked at each other ashamedly.

"Well, he laughed too . . . the big sap," the stout man said defiantly, "and I'll say it is funny."

Then we got to talking, and I learned that my companion was a camp waiter coming out after three months' work in the woods.

"I got a roll," he said, tapping his trousers pocket. "And I'm going through to Superior to see my folks."

"I'll travel with you, if you like," I offered.

"Sure, Scotty. . . . Me and you'll get along fine together."

We traveled by bus to Hurley. Watersmeet is practically the western end of the tourist country, that playground of a thousand lakes and splendid jack-pine forest land in upper Wisconsin and northern Michigan. From Watersmeet the road was rougher and the scenery less orderly than any I had passed in the Land o' Lakes.

Deer stopped searching among the grass to lift their stately heads and watch us curiously, and the road ran deep among the timber. I liked this and would have asked many questions about the country and the lumber camps it held if my companion, whose name was Bob, had not looked upon me as a humorist.

My innocent question about Watersmeet the previous evening had decided him that I was a joker with a kind of "sarky" humor he got a kick out of. I wanted to ask him why "jack"-pine, but I knew the question would set his laugh going again, and I dared not. As it was he kept looking at me with his little beady eyes twinkling, and licking his lips with the tip of his tongue, waiting for me to say something funny. I began to get nervous, in case I would say anything funny. I was glad when he started to talk. "We'll stay overnight at Hurley," he said. "Ever been there, Scotty?"

"No, this is all new country to me," I said.

He shook his head waggishly.

"Hell, you are funny. . . . Mean to say you ain't been in Hurley?"

"Never . . . honest, Bob."

"You'll like it, Scotty. It's wide open."

"What? Hooch?"

"Yeah, an' wimmen an' card games . . . proper lumber-jack's town. I'll show you round."

This sounded interesting, and when the bus stopped at Hurley I climbed out with some eagerness.

Hurley, I discovered, is really two towns. There is the regular town with good buildings and ordinary respectable townspeople, and the Hurley we were bound for.

We left the respectable town on our right and turned down a hill, crossed a railroad bridge and we were there.

I recognized the place for what it was at once. There were shops posing as tobacco stores, with the windows containing a few advertisements for cigarettes and some dummy packages. I had seen several of the same type in Buffalo's back streets. The main street of Hurley was one continuous series of these shops, interrupted occasionally by an eating house.

Bob waddled right to the end of the town, and finally entered a three-story weather-board house. There was a notice outside: GOOD BEDS, 50 CENTS.

"We'll book up here, Scotty," he said. "I'm known."

We went inside, passing through a narrow passage where the marks of dirty elbows had made a track along the walls, and into a large bare room, with benches round the walls and an iron stove in the center of the floor. A yellow light was supplied by a single uncovered electric bulb hanging from the roof. Alto-

gether a cheerless box-like place that reminded me of the Buffalo hostel.

"Hi, Maree!" Bob shouted. "Anee-bo-dy thar?"

"Comin'!" A thin shriek sounded through the wall on my right, and Bob smiled broadly.

"That's Mary. . . . She's a hard nut, is Mary."

"Well, for the Lawd's sake . . . see who's here!"

"Hullo, Mary!" Bob waddled to a tiny woman who had entered behind me, and, hugging her, he completed his greeting with a loud smacking kiss.

"You damned old fool," the woman said, pushing him away. "Whatinhell d'ye want back here?"

"Come to see you, Mary . . . and brought you a new boy. . . . A Britisher, same's you."

Mary looked toward me and I realized I was in the presence of a personality. Some day I shall write a novel about Mary; though hers is a story that requires no elaborating. She told me about herself during the next hour, when she saw I had no fancy to be a lover.

Yes, lover; though Mary admitted to sixty-seven years.

I had followed her and Bob into a small dirty room off the passageway, and we sat down to have a yarn. I found Mary following my every motion, and I discovered myself ill at ease under the strange scrutiny of two intensely alive dark eyes. I could not associate these eyes with such an old woman: they were the eyes

of alluring, wickedly alluring, youth. I wanted to laugh at this fancy, and see silly senile vanity in them. But I could not; Mary is ageless . . . the Spirit of Sensual Sin itself.

I did not see the parrot-like nose, or the wrinkled face and toothless jaws, her eyes compelled mine, and I found myself thinking of the body under the dirty rags. She was sitting with her knees crossed, and I could see her calves. They were shapely and full like a girl's.

"Gee, you have nice legs, Mary," I said and, suddenly realizing what I had said, blushed.

Mary looked wickedly out of her dark eyes, and I wished Bob would leave the room. Then I was glad he was there as I realized this woman was an old hag. But I could not get away from thinking of her body. Would it be white and full as her eyes promised? Bob's laugh filled the room.

"Look out, Scotty, she eats young 'uns."

She would, I thought suddenly. . . . She is a witch . . . a ghoul. I was disgusted with myself.

She asked me questions about myself. I did not try to lie. I told her about my desire to write novels, my disappointments, my restlessness, my present aimless wanderings.

She came and sat beside me, and I knew she had changed. She was not trying to tempt me any more,

she was mothering me. Vaguely I realized that my voice had become childishly pleading; I was begging her not to make me do anything that a decent chap would not do, and I was trying to show her, by recounting my dearest ambitions and confessing my weaknesses, that I was a decent chap. I wanted to laugh at myself, but I could not. I knew I was frightened by this fascinating old woman with the wickedest eyes in the world and the undying passion that was hers.

"Why, you are just a kid," she said, putting her bony fingers on my hand. "You should go back home, Son."

"Me? A kid!" I tried to be scornful. "Why, I'm twenty-seven, and I've been around since I was fifteen."

"Sure you have," she reasoned indulgently. "But your kind is always kids."

"Are you English?" I asked, wanting to change the subject from this embarrassing subject of self.

"By marriage, I am," she told me. "I was born in Belgium."

"How did you get out here?"

"Just drifted here. . . . I've been around a lot, too."

Then she told me a story that I had to believe.

She had been a café girl in Brussels, and an English gentleman had seen her there and fallen in love with her. He had married her—"darned old fool!" Mary added—and taken her to London. She showed me a

picture of the "darned old fool." A serious-eyed, bearded gentleman with breeding in every feature.

Mary had tried to play the game, but she was made to be an illicit lover. She seduced every friend of her husband—her laugh was a girl-like bubbling sound as she recounted her triumphs—and finally she ran away with his brother.

He lasted a week, and she went on the streets. There was no need for her to go to this depth, but she preferred it. The remainder of her life had been one man after another. Her lovers ranged from tramps to aristocrats, and she was known in every seaport of the world.

She had been in "houses" in old 'Frisco, South America, Singapore, Paris. . . . I could name no place that she could not tell of the underworld of viciousness there. If the devil were appointed for four-year terms like a president, Mary would be ruler in Hell for the rest of eternity. She not only loved sin, and desired it, she was Sin.

She gave Bob and me some coffee and buns, and disappeared.

"She's a hard nut," Bob said, when we went outside.

"She's the wickedest woman in the world . . . and the gentlest," I said, thinking of her eyes, and remembering the motherly, soothing voice.

"Hell, Scotty, don't start your joking to-night."

"I'm not joking, Bob," I said seriously; so seriously that he looked at me curiously.

"She's a bad one all right," he agreed. "She has some young chap with her every night."

I reviled myself for the jealousy that came to me when he said that.

"She won't have me, anyhow," I boasted. I knew that somehow she had decided to mother me, and that I was not to be her next lover, and I was annoyed that this should be so.

"Let's try this place. . . . It used to be good."

Bob turned into one of the sham tobacco stores, and I followed him.

A good-looking woman with red lips and a low neck blouse assessed us with hard eyes and a smile.

"Hullo, Dearie! . . . Want a girl?"

"How about a drink first?" Bob asked.

"Sure . . . Maudie!"

A door at the end of the shop opened, and a pretty painted face appeared round the edge of the doorway. Seeing us, the girl smiled.

"Come right through, boys."

A gramophone was playing a jazz tune as we followed the girl through a passage. She stopped and looked us over shrewdly.

"What you guys after? Girls?"

Bob answered. "No . . . hooch first . . . maybe we'll have a girl by-an'-by."

"Sure you will, Honey." The girl put her arms round Bob's neck and kissed him. I could see she was wearing nothing under her thin pink frock. Bob put his hand on her thigh and nipped the flesh. She swore sharply, and said, "You old devil . . . I'll pay you for that!" But I could see she did not mind.

We went into a room where there were a bar and a number of people. The men were in the majority, and were mostly lumber-jacks by their appearance. There were four girls, counting the one with us.

"What's yours, Scotty?" Bob asked.

"Home brew," I said, knowing the least harmful.

"Aw, have a man's drink!"

I felt reckless suddenly. "All right . . . make it whisky."

"Usual, Tony," the girl said.

"Who said you was drinking with us?" Bob demanded.

"Aw be good, Honey," the girl said, rubbing her hip against him. "Don't be a piker."

"Hope it chokes you," Bob answered good-humoredly.

Another girl came and stood beside me. She had a pulpy white complexion and lazy eyes.

" 'Lo, Good-lookin'," she said. "How about one for Baby?"

"Are you Baby?"

"Sure. First name Warm."

Bob laughed hoarsely. "Say, that's good . . . Warm Baby . . . haw, haw, haw!"

The group of men at the end of the room watched us sullenly. I recognized them as dead-beats who had probably spent all their money and were hanging round in hopes of getting a free drink. They were giving the girls an inning first. Bob and I were the live ones.

"Sure I'm Warm Baby." She rested her head on my shoulder. "Comin' up-stairs, Good-lookin'?"

"Couldn't make me," I said.

We drank three or four small whiskies, and I was inclined to be good-humored and superior. Bob was hugging his girl, and I saw how he would end.

"C'mon, Bob," I advised. "Let's beat it out of here. It's a blood house."

"Don't be crazy," the girl at my side said. "Come on up-stairs."

"I won't," I insisted. "This is a blood house . . . I've been around."

"You are a hell of a wise guy," she said angrily. "Let's see how wise."

The men at the end of the room rushed forward as

though the words were a signal, and I turned just in time to hit the first one. I heard Bob shout:

"Leave the kid be . . . he's all right."

The girl kicked my shin, and then the blows came like rain. I hit everything I could reach until the men closed around me. Then, kicking and swearing, I was carried outside and thrown on the sidewalk. Two men stood on the door-step and waited until I rose.

"Beat it, Son," one of them advised me. "You got a big mouth, and you're lucky to get off this easy. . . . Beat it like a wise guy."

I argued with them, and invited them to fight me. The stuff I had drunk had made me excitable, and I was still too drunk to know that I was a fool. I wanted to regain my vanity by hitting some one.

"Aw, can it," one of the two men said. "What you want to make trouble for? . . . You'll end up in the morgue if you ain't careful."

They turned away and went inside. I had sufficient sense to stay where I was.

I waited an hour for Bob to appear, wondering what had happened to him. I thought about finding Mary's house and getting a bunch to come and clean this place out. Then Bob came out. He was drunk and in great good humor. His fat face was flushed and perspiring, and his coat and waistcoat were flying open.

"Hell, it's old Scotty!" he shouted. "Say, I've had a dandy time."

"You damned old fool," I said angrily, "what have you been doing?"

"Oh, boy!" he hugged himself in drunken glee, "I had a time all right."

"Come on home," I said disgustedly. "You make me sick."

My bruises were beginning to stiffen, and I could feel swellings all over my face. When Bob laughed softly and said, "Say, Scotty, you certainly raised hell in there!" I could have raised hell with him.

Mary met us at the door of the lodging-house.

"For the Lawd's sake," she cried, "what did you hit?"

Bob put his arm round her and kissed her. "He's been cleanin' up a couple of freight trains," he said. "He's the fighter from Fighterville, is Scotty."

"Come right through, Son," Mary said, putting her hand on my arm. "You've been acting foolish."

Bob disappeared toward the bedrooms, and I followed Mary to her room. She got water and bathed my hurts. Then she smiled humorously.

"Bet they rolled you," she said.

Panic-stricken, I put my hand to my pocket. It was empty. Mary sat shaking her head with merriment.

"You silly old fool," I said, and left her laughing.

CHAPTER XIII

MARY GIVES ADVICE

I WANTED to find a seaport and a ship. Just, as I suppose, a man reared in the safety of a home will long for that security in times of stress, so I wanted to be in a ship's forecastle. I was being a fool; wandering round America with no go-to or come-from. I would end as a hobo if I didn't snap out of it.

These were not new thoughts I had as I dressed in Mary's boarding-house on the morning after my adventure. I had snapped out of it dozens of times in my life, and dropped back as soon as respectability began to pall. I was conscious, however, that my periods of steady employment were getting shorter and my drift-

ing fits were lengthening. I could feel the nothing-matters mentality getting into me, and I was frightened. I must not allow myself to become a tramp.

I had kidded myself for years now, I admitted. I had been following a will-o'-the wisp by imagining I could write, yet knowing all the time that such a talent could not possibly be mine.

How could it be? I demanded of my common sense, as I sat on the edge of the bed and stared at the dirty wall of the tiny cubicle. Born in a working-class home, educated at a council school, and never taking a prize of any sort, working in a butcher's shop from fourteen to fifteen, running off to the Navy in the second year of the War, passing from the Navy to the Merchant Service in 1919, and from that year leading a life that seemed to be a series of aimless wanderings: of shipping on steamers, and jumping them when I got fed up with regular hours, or a new country aroused my curiosity. How could the result of such an existence hope to compete with the well-born and educated?

I was what my kind nicknamed a smart Aleck; I had a certain superficial cleverness.

Better admit the truth and go where I belonged . . . on board a ship.

How I had boasted of the few stories I had sold. Every-

thing I had done, every excuse for wasting time I had invented, came up and clawed at my self-respect.

My attempts to associate with people in good social positions (I blushed as I recalled the many snubs); my childish seeking of expensive hotels when I had money, my imitation drawl when I was talking to any educated person . . . gutter snobbery!

Go back to where you belong, common sense told me—back to the forecastles—and be proud of your ability to do a working man's job. Go back, and do not try to impress your shipmates with your bits and pieces of education, but gain their respect by doing the job you are paid for. You will be thirty soon. . . . I had a fatalistic belief that if I were not settled into my life's work when I reached my thirtieth birthday, I would never be any good. "Fool, four-flusher, swanker. . . . Get back to the gutter you came from."

When I went down-stairs to the rest-room to wait for Bob, I had decided where I was going.

"Say, Scotty, they rolled me last night," Bob greeted me with a good-humored and shamed smile.

"Me, too," I told him.

"I expected that," he said, "but I was hoping you might have hung on to your wad. . . . Say, your face is messed up all right."

The bruises on my face had stiffened and were help-

ing toward my general miserableness. I rubbed a swollen eye tenderly.

"I asked for it, I suspect. . . . I'm pulling out at once."

"That's about all there is to do," he agreed. "I'll go get my job back in the camp."

"And I'm setting out for the coast and a ship."

"You can come back with me, Scotty. I can fix you in a camp job."

"No more side-tracks, Bob," I said decidedly. "I'm a sailor, and I'm going to stay where I belong."

"Not you, Son," Bob shook his head. "Your kind never learn sense."

There it was again, this classing of me with the earth's restless ones.

"You talk bloody rot," I said angrily. "I can stick a job as long as the next."

"That's the talk," Bob answered indulgently. "See you do it."

"You go to hell!" I retorted.

There would have been a row, then, but Mary came in and Bob and I only scowled at each other. Mary looked more witch-like than ever, and I thought how tiny, how wicked, and how dirty she was, as I answered her morning greeting half ashamedly.

Her eyes swept Bob and me shrewdly and she pointed

to a door. "Bob, you go and get something to eat in the kitchen. . . . Come in till I talk to you, Son."

"I'm not waiting, Mary."

"Yes, you are, Son. . . . I want you to do something for me."

I followed her.

She perched herself on the edge of a chair and sat looking at me with a mischievous smile on her parchment lips. "Well?"

"Well?" I repeated sullenly. "Well, what?"

"Well . . . what are you going to do now?"

"Anybody would think I have never been broke before," I said annoyedly. "I'm not a kid, Mary."

"I'm not too sure about that," she answered frankly. "And I don't mean your being broke, altogether . . . not the money side. . . . You can be broke other ways, Son."

"You preaching, Mary?" I said with sarcasm. "Why not preach to the boy you had last night?" I could have kicked myself for that remark.

Mary laughed softly.

"Sure, I might have," she said, "but we were otherwise engaged."

"I should not have said that, Mary."

"Why not, Son?" She smiled like a triumphant child. "I don't try to hide it. . . . But that isn't what I want

you for. . . . I want you to work for me here till you make a stake. . . . Then you can go back to the ships again."

"I'm going back now," I said. "I'm fed up with being ashore."

"Listen, Son, I like sailors. . . . They were always good sports, and I knew you was a sailor as soon as I saw you. The sea leaves a mark on a man. . . . You want to go back and stick there."

"I'm hauling out to-day."

"But you haven't the jack."

"I don't care. . . . I'll bum my way."

"Ever done that before?"

"I've worked for a meal . . . chopped wood an' odd jobs."

"That ain't bumming, Son. . . . You'll go hungry. . . . You aren't the kind."

"I'll learn."

"And that'll finish you. It will make you down-and-out instead of just down. Let me lend you some jack."

"I'm not that bad, Mary."

"You'll be worse if you don't take it . . . honest, Son, I mean this. You are on the edge of turning into a bum and a tramp, and if you have to beg your food to the coast you'll land there just a bum. . . . I know, Son . . . I've seen hundreds like you."

"I'll take a job somewhere along the line."

"No, you won't. . . . You'll keep rushing like a crazy fool to try an' get there before you have to beg too many meals. You'll go hungry for a couple of days and then you'll bum or steal . . . and that'll about finish you. Tramps is born, and you were never made to be one. . . . You're too respectable."

I laughed. Me, respectable? Me, the dashing wanderer, respectable. Mary nodded.

"I mean that, Scotty. . . . You have the respectability of one of your Scotch churchmen. You think you haven't, but it is there. You can stand any setback except having to lose your so-called pride. . . . Once you lose that you are finished. It is about all that makes you Scotch worth a damn anyhow, so you might as well admit it."

"Well, I'll hang on to it as long as I can," I said obstinately. "I don't want your money, and I'm getting out to-day."

She could see I meant what I said, and she shrugged her shoulders in a foreign gesture as she slid from her chair.

"All right, Son. . . . There is a young chap goes to Superior with a furniture truck this morning, and I'll get him to give you a lift that far. . . . Now, come and eat."

CHAPTER XIV

THE ART OF TRAIN-JUMPING

"BLACKIE" STEVENS, whom my good luck had introduced me to in a Superior lodging-house, was my guide and tutor in the art of train-jumping.

"We'll wait around here an' catch her," he said when we reached the freight-yard limit. We sat down on a pile of sleepers by the side of the track and lighted cigarettes.

Somewhere along the line some one was chopping wood. I could see the distant glow of the lamp lighting the wood-chopper's labors, and the sharp ring of the blade striking the wood was briskly clear in the hushed night air. It had rained most of the day, but now, about

nine o'clock, the sky had cleared and the night stillness was like the rest of a tired man.

In the railroad yard torches flashed and a shunting engine hissed and spluttered as huge freight cars were assembled in a long line. I tried to follow the progress of the work by watching the engine's headlight and the shunters' torches.

"You always know a yard engine," Blackie explained. "They don't have no road lights . . . just the search-light. He proceeded to give me my instructions. "I'll give you the tip when to grab holt, an' see you make for the fore end of the car, then there's no chance of fallin' between the cars if you get shook off or miss. I'll wait until you get on board. You just hang on till I come an' fetch you."

It all sounded complicated to me, but I assured him that I would not attempt any move not ordered by him.

We lay watching the lights in the yard and listening to the rattle and banging of freight cars being shunted. An engine rumbled from the round-house and backed up the assembled train.

I was rising to my feet to prepare for my jump when Blackie growled at me. "Hi, what's the hurry? Ain't you got no sense at all?" I had forgotten this was not an exciting game, and that we were running a risk of being caught or chased away by some too-zealous rail-

way detective. I crouched down behind the pile of sleepers beside Blackie.

The engine whistle screamed twice.

"She's high-ballin'," Blackie explained. "Be pullin' out now . . . get ready."

The engine spat steam high into the air and the line of cars was jerked to action. A rattle like machine-gun firing raced along the line of cars as the couplings took the weight.

The train gathered speed much quicker than I had expected, and I began to doubt my chances of catching one of the iron rungs of the freight-car ladders. The darkness made the attempt more difficult, and my thoughts were a confused bundle of instructions about looking out for sleepers, grabbing fore-ends, jumping well clear of the ground, and a dozen others. I set my jaw and stood up.

Blackie rose beside me. Three shadowy figures appeared farther along the line; I gripped Blackie's arm.

"Whadya expect?" he demanded. "She ain't no special."

I sighed with relief; these others were hoboes, too.

Suddenly a thin beam of light sprang from the top of the oncoming train and searched each side of the track. Blackie pulled me down behind the pile of sleepers again.

"The blasted dick's ridin' her out," he whispered. "We gotta beat it past the switch if we want to make her."

We slid into the ditch at the bottom of the embankment and raced ahead of the engine. Behind us we heard the shouts of the railroad detective warning the other hoboes to keep off the train.

The engine overtook us and we were bathed in the yellow glow of its search-light. It passed, and I followed Blackie in a wild scramble up the embankment again. The detective was walking toward the rear of the train, along the narrow gangway on the cars' roofs. By the time we reached the yard switches he had gone past the section of the train abreast of us, and we could climb on board without being detected. I heard Blackie's voice in my ear.

"Grab holt, Red!"

I tripped over a sleeper and stumbled along beside the roaring wheels. Recovering my balance, I ran with the train. The bottom of the huge cars was higher than my shoulder, and I had to find and grab hold of a rung at least two feet higher. And the train seemed to be doing fifty miles an hour, although I suspect she was making around fifteen.

I tried to remember my instructions. A dozen cars flashed past, and Blackie yelled at me. I half turned

my head and saw a row of iron rungs coming behind me. I jumped and grabbed. My fingers closed round a thin bar of iron, and then something gripped my body and tried to jerk me from my hold. I shouted and clung desperately. Then I was flung against a sharp corner that caught my ribs a hard blow, nearly winding me. I fell back to the perpendicular again, and my toes touched something solid. I climbed up three or four rungs, and then hung on with hands and feet, breathless but triumphant.

Cinders from the smoke-stack whipped my face, and the train did its best to jolt me from the iron ladder.

I looked up to the top of the next car and saw a man standing there, swaying easily to the train's motion. It was Blackie, and I marveled at his courage. I hung on with hands and feet. I would have used my teeth if I could have found a grip for them.

Blackie's voice came to me in wind-torn gasps.

"Darned fool . . . why did you grab the rear ladder . . . git killed some day . . . crazy . . ."

I was feeling safer now. I risked my life to wave a hand triumphantly.

"Well, I made the darned thing, didn't I?" I shouted.

Blackie leaned over the edge of the car.

"There's a flat car back there. . . . We can stay there till she stops to take water."

My courage oozed. Was I to walk along the roofs of these swaying cars? Blackie did not wait to see what I would do, but started for the rear of the train.

I climbed to the roof and kneeled there for a few minutes, getting gradually used to the train's motion. My sailor's sense of balance soon caught the swaying movement, and I walked after Blackie. He was sitting on top of a heap of coal that filled an open car, and he greeted me with a grin.

"You'll do, Red," he said. "You want to watch you pick the fore-end, though."

I had jumped my first train.

Safely on board the train, and the first excitement having subsided, I began to search for the charm of the experience. For years I had wanted to ride freight trains in the United States, believing this to be the finishing touch to my education. But it was proving disillusioning.

Coal is hard. I was discovering that fact, with another truth—coal has corners. No matter where or how I tried to sit, one or the other of these facts made itself known to me, and before I had been on board the car half an hour I was thoroughly miserable.

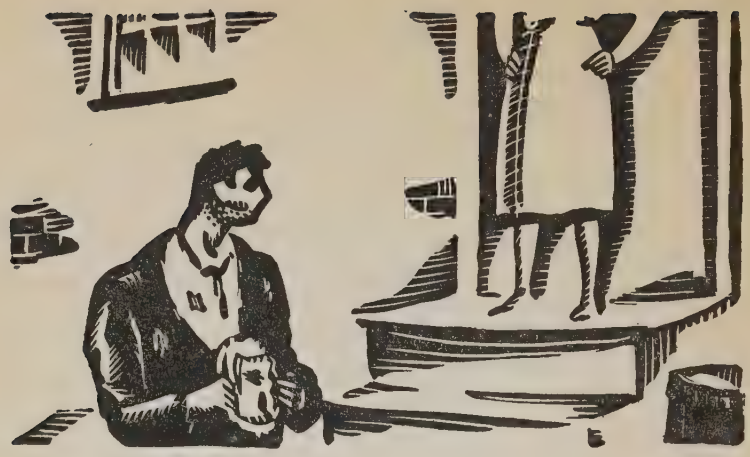
The car jolted me from hard corner to sharp corner, and then the rain returned. Blackie and I dug shallow pits in the coal and tried to escape the driving showers.

I would willingly have got out and walked to the Pacific coast at that time.

My thoughts on other matters were not very cheerful.

I was still decided to reach a seaport as soon as I could. Seattle attracted me by its name and associations; proving that I had not yet become sane. I found myself building a picture of Seattle. The picture was mostly masts, ramshackle shanties, and miners of 'ninety-eight. The warm thrill the imaginary picture was giving me was checked by my importunate common sense, and I smiled in the darkness.

Practical thoughts followed. I had twelve dollars, the amount I had received for my spare clothing. Rather, I had nine dollars and a few cents, for I had spent something in Superior. The knowledge that I had this money rather weakened my resolution to hurry seaward; as usual I would not recognize trouble until it knocked me down, and nine dollars kept it at bay. I began to argue against shipping away. I would arrive at Seattle, broke. And I would need gear: sea-boots, oilskins, and the Lord knows what. I could not go into a forecastle without some sort of kit. Here was procrastination using pride as an excuse. As the train rattled along I tried to decide whether I should find a ship or take a job and save enough to get the gear I required. I was still trying to decide this question two months later.



CHAPTER XV

WHY IS A HOBO?

I WAS lying on my back beside a talkative little stream that disappeared round the trees a hundred yards from where I lay. The grass was as cool and fragrant as a perfume, and I was utterly contented.

Beyond the stream and all around where I lay were trees and the soft green carpet of grass. By turning my head I could see the open space among the trees that was the best hobo "jungle" in the Western States.

It was all beautiful and peaceful. For a second I made an attempt to fit the scene into words, but I was too comfortable, and, lately, I had fallen out of the habit of thinking too much. Quiet people and places soothed

me, but I did not attempt to dissect these people and places to find why they were soothing. My curiosity was gradually being replaced by a placid acceptance of everything that came, be it good or bad.

"Hi, Red, Mulligan up."

Eats! My nostrils tingled as I caught the tempting smell of stewing meat and potatoes. I rose and went toward the jungle kitchen and my present buddy, "Toledo" Phil.

Toledo and I had dropped into this little paradise three days before, and I was so charmed with its complete peacefulness that I had argued my buddy into laying up for a few days. We had made two hundred miles the day we arrived at this pearl of all hobo camps, and when, dusty and tired with the jolting of the freight train, I saw the cool green sward and the roofing branches I wanted to lie down and rest for ever.

Whoever ran this jungle knew his business, I thought. Most tramp camps are just a litter of old cans and maybe a plank laid across two stones as a bench. But here were comfort and organization.

The kitchen had been built like an out-size sideboard from wood and flattened kerosene tins. It had shelves with tins containing salt and pepper on them; from nails driven into the edge of the shelves hung old pots and kettles, battered and chipped but most of them service-

able; and the fire was enclosed in a fireplace of bricks. The cooking section of the jungle showed the hand of a practical organizer.

Imagination was apparent in the other comforts of the camp. Under many of the trees I found seats: old chairs, a dilapidated couch, the rear seat, complete with the torn hood, of a motor-car, and an iron bedstead with a grass filled mattress. This was not a jungle, but a home from home.

Lines had been stretched across two trees for washing to dry, and a board had been nailed to a tree, instructing the camp occupants not to wash clothes above a certain mark so that there was no chance of getting a kettleful of soapy dirty water.

To add to these blessings, the town was good. In an hour it was possible to make enough food for a day. The name of this town I have, with characteristic lack of appreciation, forgotten; but it might justifiably be named Paradise. The townspeople seemed actually to like hoboes.

I had, by this time, mastered the art of working "handouts." I was beginning to be proud of my methods, and look contemptuously on those companions who returned with a stale loaf or a few cents. I have filled half of a sack in two hours' steady bumming.

I seldom asked for money. I needed none. If I

wanted a smoke I went into a tobacco store and bummed the dust from the bottom of the tins, and my only other need was food. I secured that from the back doors when I was traveling, but when I was lying up for a few days at any of the many hobo jungles along the railroad I went after the shops.

The first week had contained many embarrassing moments and bitter revilings, but I soon got over my pride. I have, or think I have, a sense of humor.

"We going to pull out to-night?" Toledo demanded when the last spoonful of Mulligan had been scraped from the bottom of the pot and I was sitting back against a tree, rolling a smoke and seeing nothing but peace in the world. The question irritated me.

"What do you want to rush off like that for?" I countered. "We can't do better than this, and we've been traveling as if the dicks were behind us for a week now."

"We've been laying around this jungle for a week, you mean," Toledo grumbled. "Ain't you going to make for the Tunnel?"

Toledo had discovered a tunnel was being bored under the Cascade Mountains and was using it as an excuse to keep traveling west.

"All the jobs will be took up if we don't hustle along, and they're paying real money for electricians."

My companion was an electrician. He had kept on impressing me with the fact since the minute we met. He had taken some correspondence course during a three months' convalescence in a hospital. Some philanthropist had paid. Toledo had never actually done any practical electrical work, but he knew how.

"Maybe I could get a job rigging."

I played with the idea, but knew I would never see the Tunnel.

"Sure you could, Red. An' we can save our pay and have a good stake for the winter."

"We could go south then and lay up till the spring."

Toledo looked at me in surprise. "Ain't you going to go to the coast then, Red?"

"Not on your life," I answered. "This life is good enough for me. . . . To heli with a steady job!"

"You ain't going to be a bum all your life?" Toledo demanded.

I smiled. What was the use of arguing with a man like this. All his life he had been a hobo, and until he had got bitten with the bug of ambition and been made a gift of a trade, he had been content to take what was given to him. Now, he thought that a correspondence course in electricity made him a respectable member of society. He was getting smug.

"What say, Red?"

I shook my head. "Not for mine. You go to your tunnel, Toledo; maybe I'll follow you later."

Toledo shook his head vigorously. "We'll hang together, Red. Me an' you get along fine."

"Please yourself, Buddy," I said, and Toledo knew by my voice that I did not want to talk any more.

I was getting too lazy to talk even, and Toledo had the priceless gift of sharing silence. We sank back, while the sun went down and the jungle fire began to glow red.

Two or three men were seated round the fire and their faces were softened by its light. One of the men spoke in a deep voice that was curiously soft and musical in the stillness. Toledo rose from beside me and walked across to the group. I watched his purposeless gait, but when he sat down I could see that he watched me furtively.

He would leave me to-night. I did not blame him; I was only sorry that a man could so delude himself. He thought he could go and be a working man, and was already rather contemptuous of his former brothers in misfortune.

I wondered if his ambitions would carry him as far as the Cascade Mountains—and doubted if they would. He had the hobo mentality too firmly fixed.

I saw him watching me, and I guessed it was getting

near train-time. I turned over on my side and looked steadily among the trees. After five minutes had passed, I sat up and turned toward the fire. Toledo had gone.

Sitting there, watching idly the tongues of flame stretching themselves to wavering points, I found myself speculating on the men who sat round the campfire. Toledo's desertion had aroused a train of thought.

Why were these men there? Did they realize that they have no right to exist, any more than has the flea that preys on a worthy citizen's toiling flesh? Why is a hobo?

It is easy to understand why a man has to steal rides on a train: America is too large a country to make walking from place to place possible, and what men can not afford, they will take.

I did not include the "speed kids," the boys who live for the thrill of hanging on to the top of an express-train water tank. I class them with dirt-track racers and parachute jumpers.

Freight-train jumping is just the local means of a poor man's travel, and has nothing to do with the hobo mentality.

It is also easy to understand why a man enters this life. He may be a petty criminal running away from the police; he may be a working man looking for a job in the field that is always greener than the one he stands

on; he may be answering some restless urge to see the beauties of his country or the world; he may have a hundred good, sane reasons. But why do so many men remain hoboes and bums all their lives?

It is certainly not physical weakness that makes them incapable of remaining in a steady job; for, as a rule, they are fine specimens of manhood. I have never ceased to marvel at the whiteness of their skin, and the beauty of their bodies when opportunity to study them has come at some wayside stream when they were having a wash.

They come to the place; standing amid the fresh beauty of trees and running water, their slack carriage and dirty clothing seem a sneer at manhood. They undress, and suddenly I realize that they are strong graceful men.

And they are not lazy. Any detention-farm warder will admit that the average hobo is a glutton for work when that is all there is for him to do.

"Are they degenerate?" I ask myself, seeking a reason for this lack of ambition in my brothers.

They are not. I have seldom heard a smutty joke passed among hoboes, and with few exceptions their lives as bums pass without sexual experiences.

I hand them no medals for this abstinence; they get no opportunities to be otherwise. They are kept busy

finding nature's first need—food; and they never possess enough wealth to make them attractive to even the lowest type of woman. Besides, I do not believe that a man sexually hungry could be a hobo; I have discovered that the average libertine is essentially vain and respectable in his every-day life.

Among city beggars I have found a certain amount of sexual perversion, but among the real American hobo, the English tramp and the Australian swagman it is not a trait. Tropical beach-combers are immoral, but they have opportunities among the native women. The hobo learns he must do without women, and in time ceases to think of them as necessary. He is a celibate, from necessity I admit, but as such he should be recognized.

Surely, then, if they are all I make them out to be, sexually moral and physically sound, they should be of some value to the world. Why then are they hoboes? Do they never think of how they are wasting their manhood? Do they realize that they are drones in a busy world? Or have they discovered a great truth, and are they acting on it?

Diogenes, for instance? After all, what was he but a bum with a good line? He thought and thought and thought, and came to the conclusion that the simple life in his barrel was the secret of contentment. Hoboes have found this out without thinking. (I am suddenly

given a vision of what would have happened to Diogenes if a thousand other citizens of ancient Greece had got themselves tubs and practised up a few wise-cracks for Alexander the Great. That would have spoiled Diogenes' line, and he and his companions of the Tub would have been run out of town. In which case he would never have gone down to posterity as a philosopher.)

Is hoboism an untaught and unthought philosophy? Is nothing really worth while, and have we of the Great Unwashed found a short-cut to the secret of life?

If not, why do we fine chaps lead this useless life? That bearded fellow beside the fire . . . he who leans forward and lights his pipe from a glowing stick . . . where could you find a finer man? See the shoulders of him under the old blue coat he wears, look into his intelligent eyes. Why is he not producing sons and daughters and helping the United States to build a Newer Civilization?

Why should he? I defend.

He stretches himself and feels his chest firm and packed with healthy organs; he has learned to need little and to secure that without any effort but the loss of slight dignity. (And dignity, like virtue, is only painful to *contemplate* losing.) Why should he give up this great contentment that is reflected in his

face, and which is his because he ignores all worldly responsibility?

He smiled just then, and I fancied he must have heard my thoughts about him. No wonder he smiled. . . . Can't you see his scorn for the poor, worried Sound Citizen? "Because I was sent to this world," my red-bearded hobo is saying, "and particularly to the United States, I am supposed to do a lot of difficult things to secure what I neither need nor want. . . . To me that's crazy."

Now Sound Citizen rises to argue with my Red-beard.

"You are an animal—no more," says Sound Citizen.

Ha, ha, my brother, here is a smack in the eye for your philosophy. So you hear what he said? You are an animal?

"Have it your own way," answers Red-beard. "I don't mind being an animal. . . . Only I ain't a mule."

"I shoulder the burden that civilization demands I carry," Sound Citizen boasts. "I have taken care of a woman and produced five members of the next generation."

"Attaboy," says Red-beard. "Come and watch me bum a meal off your woman and see me eat it lying on my back in the grass—see who is happiest."

Good for you, I chuckle; let this Sound Citizen talk about his petty ambitions and trivial achievements. You

and I are sensible, selfish, natural men. We were sent to this earth, and it's due to ourselves to seek what peace we can find. To hell with usefulness; let's be content.

I felt so pleased with Red-beard that I rose and crossed to the fire where he sat.

" 'Lo, Buddy," I greeted.

" 'Lo," he answered.

"This is a dandy jungle," I said, watching him admiringly.

"Not too bad," he agreed. "Say, Red, your buddy pulled out."

"Sure, I know. He's got a fancy to find himself a job and get settled down." I smiled humorously to my brother vagabond.

"That so?" he said.

"He won't stick it," I continued. "He has been a bum all his life, and he can't stick to steady jobs now." I looked round me and smelled the wood burning in the fire, and my breast swelled with satisfaction. "Who could stick in a house with a crowd of squally kids and a noisy woman after knowing this? . . ."

Red-beard was not paying much attention, I discovered.

"Don't you think like that?" I demanded.

"Can't say I do," he answered slowly. "Chap gets tired of knocking around by himself. I wish't I stuck to

my trade. . . . I was a house painter till I hit a bad streak that put me on the bum. I should have held out and I might have been a foreman now."

There was envy in his voice.

"Say, where has your buddy gone?"

"To the Cascade Tunnel," I answered weakly. "He says there is plenty of work there . . . if you want it," I added contemptuously.

Then Toledo *had* wanted to go to the tunnel; he was not merely using it as an excuse for traveling west. And suddenly I had a great horror that we were all smug citizens under our pose of contempt. Some day I would write a book and get married! Sound Citizen had won the argument; there was no hobo philosophy.

"You are right," I agreed, and I could feel myself talking like a Scotsman again. "I'm not a bum. . . . I've just had a bad streak. . . . I'm working my way to the coast to get a ship."

Suddenly I rose and walked away from Red-beard, disgusted with myself. I was a liar; he was a liar; and Toledo was a liar. We did not want to be respectable: there was a hobo mentality.

Red-beard's talk about wanting to settle down was humbug he had had to learn because he dared not admit that he liked the life he led. His hoboism was not thought; it was instinct.

I remembered how often I had heard pillars of the social structure, decent married men with banking accounts and desks, say enviously, "Gee, Kerr, I wish I could knock around as you do." And they were sincere. Red-beard and Toledo were leading natural lives and trying to think artificially; those envious longings of my clerk friends had been the natural expression from men who led unnatural lives. Everybody was a hobo at heart, because hoboism is the secret of life, contented life. Nothing *is* worth while.

I laughed then, scornfully. Looking up through lacy branches to the bright moon, feeling the utter peacefulness of stilled ambitions, I knew the Truth. This was the life nature meant us to lead; that explained the healthy graceful bodies of hoboes, and the lack of all greedy desires in them. We were animals, we should be animals, and our intelligence was not meant to build cities and make unnecessary luxuries. It was given to us to make up for our lesser physical strength among the other animals. Hoboes felt this truth; I had thought it out.

I lay congratulating myself on having stripped aside all pretense in thought (as exampled to Toledo and Red-beard) and deed (as exampled by my clerk friends). I was consciously the hobo . . . like Diogenes.

Home? I was proud of boasting that my hat was my home. Who wanted a home when the nights were as soft as silk and a man had mastered the problem of living without toil?

The moon was being smothered by dark clouds and the jungle fire was almost out. I was alone and feeling chilly. I rose and went to the railroad siding near the jungle. There was a box-car with straw in it, and I went to sleep feeling that the world could be no gentler. I was still kidding myself.

CHAPTER XVI

THE MADNESS OF IT

IN THE next two weeks I traveled almost continuously; sleeping in the box-cars I rode, and stopping only for meals. I grudged the time it took to secure food, I was, for the time, driven by a fever that could only be quieted, and then temporarily, by movement.

I have no idea which towns I visited during that, and other, spells of moving-madness; writing I never thought of, except in a half-amused way; thoughts came like bright stars and shot through my brain, to end in scattered comet-tails. Concentration was too much effort. My habits of self-analysis I suppressed; I was a hobo, and hoboes don't think. Physically I lived, mentally I was dead, or drugged.

The fortnight's restlessness wore itself out, and remorse tortured me once more.

The train I traveled on was crossing Montana, and I was sitting in a box-car, my feet dangling outside and my back against the edge of the opened door. Suddenly the brown plain was split by an outburst of vivid green. The wheels under me rumbled hollowly as the train left the solid plain and crossed a long viaduct. I looked down, and after the monotonous miles of flat prairie land the contrast startled me as a light would a sleeper.

Far below me was a valley. Grass pastureland climbed its sides and filled every corner with a generous growth; trees dotted the pasture with a more somber hue; and a broad stream followed the bottom of the valley, like an under-line emphasizing its beauty.

I could see red and white cattle grazing, a farmplace with a red roof showing through the trees. The sun-dried prairie stopped at the edge of this valley.

This unexpected picture freshened me and aroused my mind like a cold douche. When the hollow tone changed again to the sharp metallic sound, and the brown plains hid the valley, I looked round, interested.

The floor of the box-car was almost covered with men who lay sleeping or smoking. Idly I speculated on their destinations and characters. The three young chaps in sweaters and good shoes might be college boys going

west to the harvest. The two neatly dressed men were bound for jobs in Yellowstone Park. My mind became lazy, and I dismissed the others as wandering workmen.

Then a figure sat up and looked round dully. I met his eyes, and he looked at me for a moment and then lay back out of sight. I recognized him, although I had never seen him before, and suddenly I thought, "I am like that man."

The expression on his pale face, not stupid, but the unnatural intensity of a man striving to concentrate, told me I had seen a victim of Wanderlust. I knew that he was in the condition that had sent me scurrying from place to place in the last fortnight. He was still under the effect of the drug; I was recovering.

My God, I was a fool! I, who had been described as possessing unusual talent, was like that poor devil whom I could see if I sat up straight. He was rolled up in a ball, apparently asleep. But he was not asleep. His mind was filled with smoke, and his nerves were jumping to be anywhere but the place he was in.

A fine romantic thing to write about, this Wanderlust; a drugged state that there is no describing. I set myself a new task at that moment, not to describe a sunset, but to describe the real Wanderlust.

I thought of all the writers who were supposed to know it in all its "color and romance": Jack London—

great story-teller and adventurer—was too strong-minded and practical to be its victim. I could glimpse the victim in John Masefield, but his artist's love of refinement and horror of the sordid would save him. Perhaps C. Fox Smith, the poet—but her robust brain would have saved her. Kipling never smelled it, and that master scholar, Conrad, was neither true wanderer nor true sailor.

No complete Wanderlust victim writes. If he could throw off his mental lethargy for the time it took to tell his stories, the world would read a literature that would be in the same degree of relationship to the popular Wanderlust novel that continuous starvation is to missing one meal.

The record of The Nothing's Worth While! What an epic! But it will never be; its authors would have nothing to write about. They see nothing, these men with the everlasting restlessness. They might pass through the glories of heaven and only turn their heads away because the shining throne hurt their eyes. They travel alone, self-ostracized, driven night and day by the fever to be going somewhere . . . anywhere.

I must snap out of it before it gripped me completely.

When the train on which I rode entered the next town, I jumped off and went seeking a meal. My determination to snap out of it made me decide to work for

my food. No more back doors for me. I went into a dozen restaurants, seeking a job at dishwashing in return for a meal. Three waiters offered me a hand-out, but I refused their charity. I wanted to work for what I got. My hands itched to close round something dirty and heavy.

I succeeded in getting two hours' work from a Greek restaurant proprietor. Ah, it was good to feel the perspiration pouring down my cheeks and dropping from my armpits. I plunged my arms into the greasy water, and as the dishes were stacked in clean, shiny piles my self-respect began to glow again.

I ate the meal the Greek gave me, and walked to the freight yard, a virtuous, energetic citizen. I was going to the coast and a ship. The sea would blow the nonsense out of me and give me back my manhood. I would try my luck at writing again; surely these editors were not fooling me with their praise. At that moment I felt a strength and power which made me long to be in the fight for success. I stooped to lift a large rock, and laughed when I succeeded in raising it above my head. Hell, I was a fine chap!

The freight yard was about two miles outside the town, and I covered the distance half running. I was in a tremendous hurry to reach London.

The next train was due out at nine o'clock. I learned

this from two men who lay among the high grass near the line.

"The dick's hostile," one informed me.

I dismissed the hostile dick with scorn. In my fighting mood I would have fought the whole detective department on Jim Hill's railroads. I left the two tramps and walked toward the yard switch.

Reaching this limit, I sat down and thought of what I would do when I reached London. Ideas for stories rushed to my brain, and I searched my pocket for paper and pencil. I discovered none. My pockets were completely empty. Disappointed, I began to be resentful. Then I laughed at my impatience and lay looking up into the clear blue sky and building a glorious future.

I talked to myself: a little lecture on impatience, a conversation with an editor who wanted to buy my great novel, and a rehearsal of my first appearance as the novelist of the year. Sometimes I smiled and called myself an idiot, in kindly amusement, but I was sure—very, very sure—that in six months I should have written a novel, a dozen short stories, a few articles . . . all accepted and in print, of course.

"Hi . . . what are you doing here?"

I looked round. A tall muscular man in blue serge and a bowler hat was glaring at me, and his mouth had a bad-tempered twist.

"I'm waiting for . . ." Then I recognized I was addressing the hostile dick, and hated myself for allowing my voice to break. I knew I was licking my lips.

"You ain't going to make no train outa this town," the dick said grimly. "You can get on the highway and try walking for a change."

I rose and backed away.

"If I catch you around here again, I'll jug you," the detective said as he walked toward the yard.

I went about a mile down the road and circled back to the railway line, well past the yard switch. A glance informed me that I would have to catch the train as close to the switch as I could get, for there was a downgrade and the train would pick up speed quickly. Cursing the detective, I lay down again to wait for darkness.

It was dark by eight o'clock, and lying in the darkness, I watched the freight train being assembled under the bright electric lights of the yard. I had forgotten the detective for the time, and the warm evening gentled me into a dreamy mood.

I saw the busy yard as a stage. The darkness where I lay was the darkened auditorium, and the laugh that came from some hidden hobo was from a vulgar spectator in my picture.

I watched the cars appearing out of the darkness and rolling on to the lighted stage. The yard engine was

the stage manager. He hissed and spat as he lined the cars up, only to fuss away and come tearing back to take them apart again. They got flustered and bumped against one another with a rattling that disturbed the night. When the yard engine tugged at them, they trembled and stumbled after him. He stopped too suddenly, and they bumped into one another. I found myself sympathizing with the cars.

The engine should handle them more tactfully. Could he not see that they were clumsy, thick-headed fools? But no . . . he fussed and pulled and shoved. A regular bully of a fellow. Still, I had to admit, he got results. After an hour's excitement he had the train lined up under the arc-lamps. He swung away from them, and squealed triumphantly as the road engine came into the lighted area and rolled gracefully to the head of the cars.

How magnificent she is as she rolls smoothly to her place of honor, I thought. No fuss, no noise from her supple joints, she backs against the cars with hardly a sound. Unconsciously I had sexed the road engine as the Grande Dame of the railroads, just as I had sexed the fussy yard engine as the he-bully.

She blew twice, high-balling, as we hoboes say, her bell clanged a warning, and she called to her cars to follow. There was an even rattle along the line, and the play was over. I suddenly realized that the train was

almost on top of me and I would have to move quickly.

On each side of me I could see shadowy figures rise from the ground, and I knew this train was going to carry many passengers. I waited until the engine rumbled past, then I started to race with the train.

A beam of light came from the roof of the car I was going to board, and I stopped. The dick was riding her out. I decided to catch a rear car and climb to the opposite side. Perhaps the detective would not think to look there.

Every car that passed me held two or three clinging figures, and I guessed the detective would have his work cut out trying to get rid of them. The dick was certainly doing his best, for he was running along the top of the cars, striking fingers with a long stick. Men squealed and dropped to the ground. Cursing, they mounted again. I jumped for the last car and climbed over the buffers to the opposite side.

Crouching on the bottom rung of the ladder, I waited for the detective. Would he look on this side, or would he work only the off side? Suddenly the train stopped, and while I was wondering what had happened, it commenced to back toward the yard again. Men dropped from the cars, I among them, and scuttled into the thick grass along the right of way as the engine backed. As she passed the hidden tramps, the detective from the roof shouted at the would-be passengers.

The train stopped, and immediately pulled forward again. The detective's figure was sticking up into the night and appeared ridiculously tiny there. Men leaped for the cars again. I repeated my maneuver of the previous attempt, flattening myself against the side of the car and lowering my head to escape flying pebbles.

I heard a shout over my head and the sharp sound of a stick hitting something hard. There was a cry, followed by a loud shouting and a scuffling noise. It all ended suddenly, and a man climbed up the other side of my car and stood on the roof, waving his arms jubilantly.

"The dick's fallen off," he shouted.

Then shots sounded and the man raced along the roof. I heard a bullet whistle, and I pressed myself tight against the wooden sides of the car.

Now the train had picked up speed, and I knew the detective could not board her again. It was safe to find a more comfortable riding place. I climbed to the top of the car and walked toward the engine. There was an open car near the fore end of the train and I dropped in beside a group of men. They told me that the dick had hit at a man, and the man had grabbed the stick and jerked the detective off the roof before he could let go the stick. No one knew if any one was hurt, but they guessed the shots proved that the dick was all right.

CHAPTER XVII

I ENTER PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL

I REACHED the Columbia River Valley in this attempt to snap out of it, but at The Dalles my curiosity prompted me to climb to the top of the high land overlooking the river. I wanted to see the scenery from a vantage that would do it credit.

I left the freight train on which I had ridden a hundred miles, and climbed up a winding cart track. When I reached the heights I was surprised to discover I was on the edge of a gigantic plain that was golden with endless grain.

This was too much for my curiosity, and I scarcely glanced toward the river, but walked for miles among

the wheat- and corn-fields until I came to a farmhouse. The building reminded me of eating, by the hobo train of associations I had learned lately. I avoided a noisy dog and knocked at the door.

A little man in old khaki trousers and a British soldier's uniform coat opened the door. I prefer women, but the khaki coat heartened me.

"Could you give a chap a meal, Mister?" I made my speech very Scotch.

Shrewd eyes examined me, and the man answered me in unmistakable Welsh.

"Indeed I might do that," he said. "If you will split some wood for me."

I was disappointed. That was a woman's bargain, a man usually gives a coin or tells a beggar to go to hell.

"Certainly, Mister," I answered. "Where do you keep your ax?"

The little Welshman laughed. "Come in and have a meal," he said. "You can find the wood after you eat."

I followed him into an untidy room that looked as though it had never been cleaned. Old papers and clothes filled every corner, and ashes were piled high in the open fireplace.

"You are an Englishman," he said, when he put a loaf and an untidy lump of cold mutton in front of me.

"Scotch."

"Can you play football?" he asked eagerly.

"I used to . . . I guess I could manage a game."

He rubbed his hands gleefully. "That's good. When you eat, we'll go outside and have a game."

When I had finished the loaf, he took me outside. He brought a brand-new football with him, and his eyes were bright with happiness when we faced each other on a roughly marked "center."

I earned that meal. The Welshman was football mad, and he had not played the game for ten years. He kept me busy for two perspiring hours, and then suggested I should stay and work at the harvest with him the following week. I said I had to make the coast as quickly as I could. When I walked back down the hill that evening I remembered that he had not shown me where the ax was.

I walked through the town of Dalles and found a place to sleep near the river's edge. By making a windbreak of stones and old wood I was fairly comfortable. My two hours' sport had tired me, and that helped to send me to sleep. The next morning I was sore in every muscle, and I groaned as I walked to the railway yard. I did not feel it was worth while going in search of food, so I sat down beside the right-of-way.

There are not many places as beautiful as the Colum-

bia River Valley, and when my joints eased I began to enjoy the morning. At my feet the river raced past, broad and swift. On the far side the land rose in brown bluffs, with the smoke of a train rising from the face of the cliffs. Behind towered the wall of the plain I had visited the previous evening. Everything along this river deserves the favorite American superlative, grand.

Scenery, however, is for the well-fed. I found more interesting substance at a house on the edge of the town, and the woman said she was sorry I was lame. I did not explain I had been sacrificed on the altar of Sport, and for the first time saw some good in the Welshman.

Returning to the railway yard, I found four men sitting on the grass. They asked me when the next train was going west, and I said I did not know. I cadged the makings of a cigarette from one of them and after lighting it felt that I could really enjoy the scenery.

"Say, look what's coming!"

I turned to see what was remarkable about the man walking toward us. He was neatly dressed in a dark suit and a collar and tie, his hat was hidden by a notice tied round it. When he came up to where I sat I could read "WINDOWS CLEANED" on the notice.

"Morning, gentlemen," the newcomer greeted, and I sat up in amazement. He spoke in a cultured voice. . . . I had found the Younger Son at last!

"Good morning," I answered. "The weather looks like holding."

"Delightful, isn't it?" he agreed, and I saw his eyes twinkle.

He sat down, and I examined him respectfully. His clothes were almost new, although his collar was soiled badly. His tie was a bow, and he was almost spruce. The black mustache that adorned his lip was neatly trimmed, and looking for the other sign of breeding, I saw that his shoes were shining. Unlike the rest of us, he had luggage. Over his shoulder was slung a Seattle sack, and from it protruded the end of a window-cleaner's squeegee.

Aspiring that way myself, I have great respect for gentlefolk, and when I addressed this man I spoke in my best, educated tone.

"Are you an Englishman?" I inquired.

Humorous eyes examined me, though the man's features were perfectly serious.

"I come," he answered, "from the Land of Eternal Sunshine."

"An Australian?"

"You know the magnificent continent that could not supply me with an honest living . . . without a maximum of effort?"

"I spent two years there."

"You have? Splendid. Tell me, young sir, have you been along the Lachlin?"

"I followed it a hundred miles from Hillston."

"Remarkable! Did you notice a blue gum tree about forty miles from Hillston, with two letters cut deep into the bark? You would know it by its position; it stands on a little point of land, and the greenest of grass stretches to the river like a lawn. . . . Did you notice it?"

"I'm terribly sorry . . ."

"It does not matter. . . . But I marked that tree twenty-five years ago. When I am sixty I am returning to Australia, and I am going to lie under that blue gum tree, on that beautiful grass, and grow old gracefully."

"Why wait until you're sixty?" I asked.

"Because the Commonwealth does not give the Old Age Pension to any one under that age. . . . I must have tobacco and food."

"I thought you were an Englishman. Your voice . . ."

"A triumph, isn't it?" he demanded in the same mock-serious tone. "I traveled for three years with an Oxford man, and I got it from him."

"Did you exchange?"

"No, this is just a good imitation. . . . You should know that an Oxford accent is not exchangeable. . . . It comes from the roots of old England."

I liked this Australian with his mischievous eyes and his solemn face.

"Do you really clean windows?" I asked.

He made a little bow from where he sat. "May I introduce myself," he said, with well-simulated pride, "Professor Pat O'Hara, the Window-Cleaner of the Northwest. . . . I have written several pamphlets on the subject. . . . Perhaps you would like to read them."

"I certainly would." I laughed outright.

"Fools have always laughed at genius," O'Hara commented without rancor. "It is the price of greatness."

In the next hour the professor of window-cleaning and I got very friendly. I tried hard to break down the whimsical humor that he assumed, but he refused to talk seriously, even when he held out his hand and said:

"Kerr, I like you. I feel that you have talent, and I am going to offer you an outlet for that gift. . . . Will you become partner to the greatest window-cleaner in the United States of America?"

"Do you mean that?" I asked.

"I do."

"Then I'm your partner," I said, expecting he would laugh and tell me that he was joking. Instead he rose.

"Come, then. The town of Dalles has many dirty windows on which my art can be exercised."

CHAPTER XVIII

A LINE DEFINED AND ITS APPLICATION

EVERY person in America has a line. A line is whatever style of speech or attitude he adopts in the world. For instance: the smart Aleck of the City has the He-Man or the Blasé line; his girl friend has a Gold-Digging or a Sweet-Seventeen line; the business man has a Slick or a Four-Square-Never-Rob-Orphans line. It extends to the arts: Douglas Fairbanks has a hundred-per-cent. He-Man line, and Fannie Hurst has a line of Human Interest. By strict devotion to this national characteristic, America has made sincerity and naturalness synonymous with plain foolishness. Success depends on the thoroughness with which the individual line is worked.

It took an Australian to show me a line that was a complete work of art, and that Australian was Professor Pat O'Hara, the Window-Cleaner of the Northwest. O'Hara did not believe in back doors, but strode confidently to the front. Our first prospect was a stout, kindly-faced housewife.

"Good morning, Madonna," O'Hara opened. "We have called with reference to your windows."

The housewife looked from him to her front windows.

"Why, what is wrong with them?" she asked anxiously, for O'Hara's voice had been solicitous. "The kids haven't been playing with stones, have they?"

O'Hara raised his hand reassuringly.

"Nothing so calamitous," he said soothingly. "They are . . . not dirty, Madonna, but dull."

"They ain't!" the woman retorted. Then she looked at the large notice on O'Hara's hat. "Oh, you're window-cleaners, are you?"

"*The* window-cleaner, Madonna. Professor Pat O'Hara and his assistant. . . . Experts on glass and artists in our profession."

The housewife laughed good-naturedly.

"You got a lot of cheek anyhow, young man! . . . What will you charge for doing my windows?"

O'Hara stepped back and counted the windows, he

walked right round the house without haste, and then stood apparently deep in thought. He looked up suddenly.

"Two dollars, Madonna . . . for you." It was beautiful the way he said ". . . for you."

"Two dollars!" The housewife's smile had gone and she was scornful.

"Two dollars," O'Hara repeated. "I assure you, Madonna, it would be five to any one else."

The woman laughed at this. "I'll give you one-fifty," she said, "but not a cent more."

O'Hara bowed. "I never bargain, Madonna. . . . One-fifty it is."

He borrowed a bucket from the housewife, and we cleaned the windows. I think those windows had never been polished as they were when Pat said the job was finished. The housewife gave us two dollars and a piece of pie, in token of her appreciation.

"Glass, Partner, is a living substance," O'Hara instructed me as I rubbed at the windows. "That apparently hard surface is a delicate skin that must be treated scientifically. . . . It is not enough to rub. . . . You must rub the right way. . . . A gentle, circular movement toward the end, Partner . . . revives the living tissue as healthy flesh revives a dulled pearl. . . . The corners, Partner . . . make them stand out. . . . Win-

dows are square at the corners, not rounded as they usually appear after an ordinary cleaning."

As he talked he removed specks from the glass with a tiny scraper made from a safety-razor blade, or brought the surface to brilliance with a square of chamois leather.

When we had finished this house, O'Hara led the way to an eating-house, and for the first time in months I sat down to a meal that I paid for in cash. I can not remember enjoying a meal as I did that one. I regained my self-respect, and I felt grateful toward the Australian.

"You like it?" he asked, watching me with kindly humor.

"I do."

"Good!"

We took a freight train eastward, and I forgot about London and literary success. Here was expression no less than the printed word. Perhaps greater in its way, for at least you can see through a polished window.

Art, after all, I thought one day when I had been with O'Hara for a week, is looking at life and nature through the window of the artist's soul. Realistic Art is merely looking through a window.

I could see the golden heads of wheat stretching for miles from the house where I was working, and around

the building there was an orchard loaded with rich fruit. By cleaning the window I was showing this beauty more clearly, and is that not art? If I had been of a more modern school I should have smeared the glass with mud. I felt I had achieved my life's aim without the aid of pen and paper . . . a sponge and chamois leather were my tools.

O'Hara knew all about the Arts. As we traveled from town to town he entertained me with his knowledge. He warned me against the New Realism in literature.

"They call it the power of simplicity," he said one evening when we sat by the freight yard at Umatilla in the state of Washington. I sat, hands clasped round my legs and my chin on my knees, listening with the attention I gave his every word.

"They call it that," he said, "and you have only to compare it with the older writers to see they lie.

"Thirty years ago, a writer would have said, 'John hurried down to breakfast because it was cold in his bedroom, and after refusing eggs and bacon, which he detested, he enjoyed a warming meal of toast and coffee.' . . . Now compare that with, 'It was cold . . . the cold pressed against the window . . . it was cold. The room was cold. The world was cold. My God, how cold it was, John thought. He went down to break-

fast. The chair was cold. My God, could he never escape from the cold? Eggs and bacon? Eggs and bacon! The yolk was yellow—like jaundice. The white was white—like death. The gravy flowed round the egg and crept over the bacon like a slimy plague. It was thick and slimy, like blood—white blood. John thought, would virgins have white blood? He suddenly remembered he had never seen virgins' blood. . . . My God, if the gravy was red, it would be blood! White blood! He could not eat blood . . . blood . . . blood . . . cold . . . blood . . . cold.' "

O'Hara made a gesture with his hands.

"That is modern realism . . . avoid it like a plague."

In the next two months we traveled a regular beat between the Cascade Mountains and the foot of the Rockies. Our limits were Spokane and The Dalles. O'Hara had worked the small towns between these points for five years, he told me, and he had a connection among the well-to-do houses that would have kept us busy night and day if he had attended his clients regularly.

Pat, however, never did more than was necessary for our comforts.

"We have seventy cents, Partner," he said one morning, "but the weather is fine."

That meant we would work until we had two dollars and fifty cents, enough for our day's food and smokes, then we would go and lie on the grass until a train came. If the weather was suitable for sleeping in a box-car at some railway siding, we did not work for our "flop" money. If rain threatened, we stopped when we had made an extra dollar. With O'Hara as companion, this was an almost perfect life to lead.

To-day I do not know what or who my partner was. I tried hard to break down the bantering humor that he hid behind, for I was positive that it was merely a mask. His blarney was too shrewd and too pregnant with educated thought to be only smartness. All I learned was that he had been everywhere worth visiting, according to my ideas.

He spoke several languages, as far as I could judge, fluently. And he had a fondness for Spanish. His usual address for all women was Madonna. I wanted to ask him why he addressed them by this word, but I was enlightened soon after I became his partner.

We called at a house in Ainsworth, and a tall thin woman with a long chin greeted us chillily.

"What do you call me that name for?" she demanded. "It's wicked blasphemy."

"Madonna!" O'Hara said reproachfully. "Not blasphemy."

"It is," the woman insisted. "You should not call any one that holy name."

"But, Madonna, you are aware of what the Madonna was celebrated for?" He looked at the woman with gentle, admiring eyes. "Beauty and chastity . . . Madonna, could I name you other?"

This story is the best example of O'Hara's line that I remember.

One evening we visited Spokane. We had planned an evening's city entertainment and had worked two whole days to raise the ten dollars we reckoned would be necessary.

We had the best seats in a cinema, and a huge meal in a good restaurant. My partner had taught me the folly of giving value to outward appearance, except cleanliness, and I did not care what the restaurant waiter thought of my poor dress. I rather hoped he would mistake me for an eccentric millionaire.

I was ill at ease, however, and I felt furtive. Pat looked at me several times as he criticized the picture we had seen. My discomfort did not decrease as I discovered my companion's glances lacked their usual twinkling humor.

"You are leaving me," he said suddenly.

I was amazed at any such suggestion, then I realized that he could read me better than I could read myself.

"Don't let it worry you, Son," he continued with a kindly smile. "I could see it coming . . . that's why I planned this outing. . . . A farewell banquet."

"I want to go back to England, Pat," I explained, hating myself for the lie. I did not want to go anywhere in particular.

"You may land there," he agreed. "I should not have stopped you last time . . . and you might have made it."

I had told him where I was bound for when I first met him.

"It has been a good thing for me . . . meeting you," I defended.

"No, Son . . . a bad thing. I have taught you a lot of high-flown nonsense that you will never profit by, and kindness is a crime to a man like you. . . . It will take a kick in the pants to keep you sensible . . . maybe a woman will do it."

I would have liked to quarrel with him then.

"You think I am not going to England?" I asked.

"I don't know," he said frankly. "You might land anywhere. . . . Anyhow, I am sorry you are leaving me."

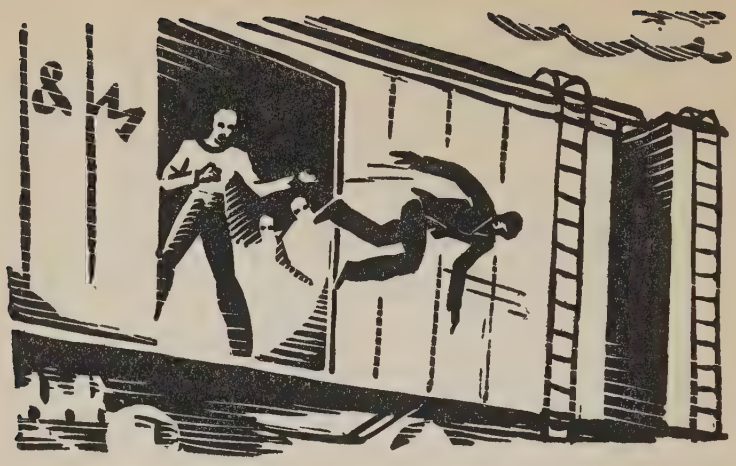
That stopped any chance of a row, and I fell silent. We left the restaurant and walked to the hostel where we had booked cubicles. Pat held out his hand when

we reached the landing where our rooms were. I shook hands, feeling like a fool, and thinking this drama nonsense. O'Hara was enjoying it all, for he was pure actor in everything.

"Good-by, Restless Spirit," he said in a voice that appeared to be charged with emotion. "You must go . . . the call is upon you."

"Don't be so damn' silly," I retorted, feeling that this exaggeration was a mockery of a real tragedy. "I'll see you in the morning."

I left Professor Pat O'Hara standing at the door of a fifty-cent cubicle, his hand raised in a parting gesture and his chin drawn back in the approved tragic manner. But his dark eyes were twinkling, and I had an idea he was laughing inwardly. I would have given much to know if he was laughing at me or himself.



CHAPTER XIX

A HOLD-UP

THE first train leaving the yard at Spokane was going east, and I took it. I had a hazy idea of making for New York again, but I did not care much where I went in the next few days.

I crossed the Rockies at Summit and would have liked to leave the train and examine the fashionable holiday place. The people I could see riding to and from the château near the railroad had a Wild West appearance that pleased my sense of humor. However, a civil, if firm, train guard advised me to stay where I was. Obviously I was not the sort of guest Summit tried to attract.

As the freight train proceeded across Montana, she collected nearly two hundred passengers. I soon learned that these men were returning from the harvest, bound east for their homes.

The crowded box-cars carried a fair representation of American citizens. There was a crowd of college boys returning with enough money to pay their fees for the next year; Italians, Germans, and a dozen more nationalities, joyful but fearful in the possession of more money than they had ever held before; and a wild collection of casual laborers who lay snoring in corners of the empty cars or sat around gallon tins of bootleg.

I fared well on that trip. Where dire want dwelt nine months every year, there was an overflowing plenty. Men were racing for the stores whenever the train stopped at a town, and returning with armloads of bread and tinned meats. I did not have to work a house until I reached Minnesota.

The harvesters were a merry crowd, except for the Italians and Germans, who kept in groups and sat in the corners of the cars watching every one suspiciously.

Banjoes and mouth-organs played the train right across the Western States, and every hobo jungle along the line could have mustered a complete orchestra without an effort. I began to enjoy myself, though at first I had been resentful of the noisy crowd.

We sang *Sweet Adeline* and *The Sidewalks of New York* (New York's National Anthem) until our throats were sore; and I remember sharing a whole round cheese with a fellow Scot, which is something to boast about.

One afternoon, when the train on which I was riding was crossing North Dakota, there was an adventure, and the fears of the Italians and the Germans were justified. A slim youth rose up in the car and stood with his back to the side. His voice snapped viciously above the noise of the half-drunk harvesters.

"Put 'em up everybody . . . quick as you like!"

The singers' voices tailed off suddenly, and we all faced the youth. He waved us together with a hand that held a black automatic.

"Get lined up . . . and toss your wads on the floor."

I had a hurried glimpse of white faces moving around me as I shuffled against the wall of the car, opposite to where the gunman stood. There was a sudden quick movement near me, and the gunman turned too late to stop a man who jumped for his legs.

The next minute was a pandemonium of shouting and flying legs and arms. I jumped into the struggling group, but I had no idea where the gunman was. We all tore at one another in a mad scramble.

"Toss him off the train!"

"Hold him till we get the dicks to him."

The group split asunder, and the gunman's face appeared. He was in a terrible mess. His nose was pouring blood, and an ear looked as though it hung by a thread. A tall fellow took charge by the simple method of dragging the hold-up man clear of the others. He dragged the poor devil to the open doorway, and sent him flying into the air with a powerful heave. The man hit the side of the embankment, face first, and rolled over like a lifeless sack.

The harvesters piled round the car doorway and shouted curses at the insensible man. They were like a lot of cruel children the remainder of the afternoon, boasting and rejoicing at the gunman's fate.

I should have not felt sorry for the man, for his kind have robbed many poor workmen who have slaved in the harvest fields for the money taken from them; but I did. I felt myself allied to the gunman, somehow, and I was full of scorn for the honest-working-man talk of my fellow passengers. I shifted to another car at the next stop.

An account of the hold-up was passed from car to car, and the jollity disappeared. Men sat alone, or with their friends, watching one another suspiciously. It was depressing, and I left the train at Bismarck.

I caught the next freight train and climbed into a car with a crowd of young college boys.

The boys were refreshing, after the bootleg swillers. They were from eighteen to twenty years old and, after their work on the harvest, a good-looking, healthy bunch of youngsters.

I told them about the hold-up, and they laughed.

"Just our luck to be on the wrong train," one curly-haired youngster boasted.

I like vanity, particularly boyish vanity, and I went out of my way to be sociable. One young chap joined me at the car doorway, and we sat with our feet dangling above the speeding ties.

"Are you going back to college?" I asked.

"Sure am, Scotty," he said. "Not back, just going."

"First year?"

He nodded, and his smile was full of pride. "Yes, I'm going to be a lawyer by and by."

"What were you doing before?" I asked curiously, liking the boy more every second.

"I was a store clerk," he told me. "Getting twenty dollars a week . . . that'll be lunch money to me in another five years."

"You are aiming high," I commented.

"And how!" he agreed. "Say, Scotty, I aim to be a big man some day."

"So did . . . " I choked the bitter cynicism off short. The boy's vanity was infectious. "So do I," I ended.

"What's your line, Scotty?" he asked, and I caught the curious, almost pitying, expression in his eyes.

"I'm going to write a big book some day," I boasted.

"Are you, Scotty?" He was laughing at me with his frank eyes.

"I've written short stories," I defended myself. "Why shouldn't I write a novel?"

"Sure, Scotty. . . . Say, I'm going to have a whale of a time at college." He looked steadily at the passing country, but I knew he was seeing a far more glowing picture than the green grass and grazing cattle.

"Are you going to be a day student?" I asked.

He nodded. "Going to try. . . . I expect I'll have to take some sort of night job, though."

"Are your folks helping you?"

"No. My folks have to go easy."

"Did they want you to go to college?"

"They don't mind," he said. "They'll be glad when I make good, of course."

I had discovered this lack of parental restriction in the United States, and I thought it a good thing. This boy had made up his mind to give himself a college training. The parents had not been able to help him, but they did not preach any ca' canny gospel to him or try to stifle his ambitions. I began to understand the extreme self-reliance of the American youth.

"In Scotland lots of parents almost starve themselves to put their sons through the universities," I told this boy. "These poor students usually become parsons."

"Their parents must be crazy," this boy answered without hesitation. "And it doesn't say much for the sons."

I had not looked at it in this way.

"What made you want to go to college?" I asked.

"Because I want to be a big man and make my million," he answered frankly. "A guy has no kind of time as a store clerk."

Vanity, I thought; surely that is poor stuff to build into a career.

But was it? I remember some years ago my father and I were watching the captain of a small ship step over his gangway. The captain was almost hidden behind gold braid and carried a silver-knobbed cane.

"Look at the Big I Am," I had observed.

My father looked at me with quiet humor.

"Remember, my son," he said in the bantering tone that always softened his corrections, "remember we are all vain, only some of us are better at hiding the fact than others are . . . and maybe the captain's kind are the wisest."

Years had taught me the truth of my father's observation. Vanity in a man with any talent is the finest

incentive to use that talent. A vain man needs praise or decoration, and both these cost effort, and effort develops talent. I think the unashamed vanity of the American boy and girl has much to do with their country's prosperity.

New York typists dine with their employers, and try to dress like Park Avenue. They are unquestionably the most aspiring working girls in the world. They demand good shows and automobiles from their boy friends, or freeze them. That is good for the boy with the right stuff in him. It makes him ape his richer brothers, and leads him to find the means of satisfying his girl's demands. Many will disapprove of this way of arousing ambition, but I admire it. It is Youth. There may come a time when the man realizes that he is not going to achieve his ambitions, and the girl discovers that the boy is more important than the theaters and cars, but they have tried. A youth who has not tried never built a country or robbed a bank; both considerable achievements, and the spirit of American youth. Criticize them if you care.

The boys of the freight car were taking the straight means to achieve their ambitions. They had enough common sense to leave the bank-robbing to their get-rich-too-quickly brothers.

I met other boys like these all over the States. They

worked on the Lakes steamers, hitch-hiked or rode freight trains across the continent to get to the money-making harvest, and invaded every open labor market. Some were serious students, with sincere longing for a particular profession, but mostly they only wanted to get a college education and be big men. They would not all be president of the United States or Captains of Industry, but while they wrought hard for the money that was to take them through college, and as long as they kept aiming high, they were big men, and what they may actually achieve will not alter that description by one single letter.

I left the boys at Duluth. I thought I might get another berth on the freighters, but the season was too near an end for men to leave their berths, and there were no jobs. Already the north winds were baring sharp teeth, and I knew it was time to hole up somewhere.

I hung about the Lake Carriers' Hall at Duluth for over a week. A Scot who had something to do with the place let me sleep there two nights. The other nights I stayed at lodging-houses, paying with money I got by working the town. Food was easily secured from the cooks on the freighters, and I lived.

The approaching winter frightened me at times, and I debated where I should go: the Southern States, or

back to New York? I put off the decision day after day, and took what comfort I could by sitting close to the fire in the Lake Carriers' Hall.

I noticed that only the bums spoke to me at this time. The Lakes seamen who waited in the hall never brought out a packet of cigarettes near me, and noticing these things, I was cynically amused.

I was recognized as a bum. Curiously, I examined myself in a mirror. Yes, I had the hungry, cunning eyes of my tribe, and my freshly shaved chin looked unnaturally clean. I smiled at the reflection, and envied no man. I was proud to be a bum; only mugs work. I was amused by the chilliness of my fellow men, but the chilliness of the Great Lakes winds worried me.

Then one day I thought of Mary, and that afternoon I went on the highway.

I walked along the road for hours, waving to each car and receiving no response. Remembering the generosity of American motorists on my earlier travels, I wondered why no one stopped for me. Then I remembered that I was a bum . . . and looked it. I stood in the middle of the highway and shouted curses after every car. Gradually I was breeding the resentment against the respectable world that is the last sign of the dead-beat.

I had to walk to Superior, and then ride trains to

Hurley. The weather was bitterly cold, and I was afraid I would go numb and drop off when I was forced to cling to an outside ladder for any length of time.

I made short stages of ten to twenty miles, for I could stand the cold cars no longer without being tormented by numbing fingers and toes. My boots were almost worn through, and my clothing consisted of three old shirts, a thin jacket and trousers. When I reached Hurley I was hungry and blue with cold. I remembered Pat O'Hara's satire on realism, and wondered how a realist would have described my feelings. What words I could utter with my chattering teeth were far from cold.

I raced up Hurley Main Street, and burst into Mary's lodging-house like a madman. The rest-room was crowded and smelled of sweating humanity, but it was a heaven to me. I must have been colder than I realized, for I fainted with the pain that shot through me when I warmed my hands at the iron stove.

I came to on Mary's bed. I remember noticing how clean the sheets were, in contrast to the dirty wizened face of its usual occupant.

"Drink this," Mary greeted practically, putting a cup to my lips.

The white mule restored my senses with a jerk, and I sat up.

"I was freezing on the train," I explained.

"Guessed that much." Mary shook her head, and tangled strands of gray hair fell over her face. "You had better stay here for an hour or two. . . . I'll get you a meal. I expect you haven't eaten for days."

I did not want to remain in Mary's bed.

"I can get up," I said hastily. "I'm broke, Mary, but maybe you could let me have a room?" I noticed a whine in my voice.

Mary sneered wickedly. "Penniless but pure. . . . You needn't worry, Son."

I felt foolish and lay back with red cheeks.

Mary bustled about the room and cooked some eggs and coffee. When I ate the meal she came and sat on the edge of the bed and looked at me.

"You didn't go back to England, then."

"I had a tough break, Mary," I commenced.

She interrupted me with a knowing smile.

"Sure you had, Son. . . . You're a bum now . . . like I told you."

"I'm not, honest, Mary. I'll get a job."

"Not you. But if you want work, I can fix you at a lumber camp. They're felling now."

"As soon as I'm all right."

But I never worked in any lumber camp. I made beds in Mary's flop house for three months, and the rest

of the winter I spent either sitting looking at the coal burning in the iron stove, or hanging about the blind pigs cadging smokes. If any one would listen to me, I told him about the time I was a journalist in London. A letter I had received from one of the New York editors, commenting on the story he bought, was a tattered fragment from being handed round as evidence of my previous fame.

Mary let me have a bed in return for being her confidant. I had developed a biting humor, and when I was with her I exercised it on her various lovers. She got a lot of enjoyment from my comments, and I found myself installed as court jester. There were two leading wooers when I left Hurley in the early spring. One was a middle-aged man who ran whisky and foreigners across the Canadian border in the summer months, and the other was a young Swedish lumber-jack who could place cards where he wanted them with fingers that hung from his hands like a bunch of sausages.

Mary usually invited these two men and myself into her room every evening. Mary lay on the bed and posed like a film siren, and the two men sat on chairs. I leaned against the wall, when I was not running out for more beer. Toward ten, when the room was thick with cigarette smoke and the three were getting drunk, the scene might have done for a witch's cave.

Mary rolled about the bed, laughing like a schoolgirl and throwing coquettish glances at the two men. The lumber-jack was always wanting to demonstrate his skill with a pack of cards, and the older man had another trick. He opened his mouth until his cheeks were stretched tight, forming a natural drum. He smacked the taut flesh with his fingers and drummed out tunes. While he played, he tried to look soulfully at Mary, until his weather-battered face appeared to be all eyes and mouth. After Mary had seen this trick for the first time, she instructed me to get her wooer doing it every evening.

"Say, can you play *Suwanee River* on your cheeks, Dan?" I would ask admiringly.

"Sure. . . . Anything." Like all true artists he was blind to his own limitations. He opened his mouth in an O edged with ragged teeth, and drummed out some unintelligible sounds.

The lumber-jack tried to laugh scornfully, but Mary, lying on the bed, hugged herself with delight. I looked at the musician in awe.

"Cripes, you must have practised a lot!"

"Say, that's nothing. . . . Listen to this."

Mary told me one day that she might marry the smuggler. She certainly got more enjoyment out of him than is usual in marriages; although her favoring the

musician showed true feminine folly in the choosing of a mate. The lumber-jack's skill with the cards might have been directed into profitable channels, at least; whereas the other man's accomplishment could never be more than a parlor entertainment. Women are like that, even wise ones.

I told the smuggler what she said, and he gave me five dollars the day I left Hurley.

CHAPTER XX

TO THE ROAD AGAIN

"Rejoice and be glad for the springtime has come."
—From a Phonograph Record.

I was not a very pleasant individual at this period of my career. I was either dead to all desire, except when I wanted a cigarette, or, when a glimmer of reason came to torment me, sullen and ready to flare into an excitable anger if any one poked fun at me. Luckily, deadbeats are not humorists, and I could keep myself to myself except for Mary.

Looking back, I can see she was prompted by a real concern for my welfare, but her methods were wrong. She should have thrown me out of her lodging-house.

Instead of doing that, which would have meant my seeking work from desperation or freezing to death, she fed me and tried to stir me to consciousness by making fun of me. I was afraid she would throw me out if I answered back, and I have never had the nerve to battle with a woman's tongue. When she saw I was dead to verbal insults, she tried to rouse my twisted pride by giving me all the dirty jobs in the house to do.

"Hi, Scotty, there's a drunk up there. Go quiet him.

"Say, don't lay around there. Go make some beds."

There were other, more disgusting jobs that fell to me.

When I wanted anything from her, I did the tasks willingly enough; but when I wanted to be alone and steep myself in misery by contemplating myself, I had to stifle an almost hysterical rage. In this last condition, I usually left her standing and walked for miles in the country.

"Why should I wait on that dirty old hag?" I demanded aloud as I stalked along indignantly; "I may be down, but I'm not yet down to cleaning up the dirty messes of drunken lumber-jacks. . . . If I were like some of the men, and slept with her, she would not ask me to be a scavenger." Though I knew that if I had had that weakness I would not have been in her house after she got tired of me. Mary's lovers had short reigns.

When physical weariness melted the indignity of being expected to give some return for my food and bed, I would go back to the lodging-house, saving my pride by assuring myself that Mary would be paid every penny I cost her as soon as the weather eased and I found a job. I was beginning to hanker after the Great Lakes ships again, and spring seemed a long time coming.

If I happened to run against Mary when I returned from these rebellious walks, she never referred to my disobedience, and did not ask me to do any more tasks for several days. Maybe a glimmer of mischief sparkled in her shiny eyes for a second, but that was all. Such good sportsmanship made me feel ashamed of myself, and the next morning I would rise early and scrub a floor or mend every broken fitting I could see. Then, feeling virtuous, I would go and tell her what I had done. She would say, "Good boy," and give me an extra big meal and some cigarettes. After that, I would be cocky for a day or two; correcting the boarders for making messes, or for spitting anywhere but against the stove. But another admirer always came to take Mary's attention from me, and lacking applause, I became sullen again. Who can be a good boy without a pat on the head at regular intervals? It was a great pity Mary did not pat me with a beer bottle, hard. That is what makes Cockney marriages successful.

One day in early March the sun played a trick.

I had been sitting in the lodging-house rest-room all that morning. The dirty windows and another building close against them kept the sun hidden from us who sat on benches round the stove.

A stove seems to fascinate dead-beats, and we crouched close round the one in Mary's lodging-house, looking at it with expressionless faces. No one spoke; the only sounds were occasional coughs and the sharp hiss as some one spat against the hot iron. I thought how dirty was the wooden floor, and my conscience told me I should get up and sweep it. I would have enjoyed the exercise, but my queer pride forbade me to be sweeper to the collection of hoboes with whom I sat. "Why should it be swept, anyhow?" I argued with myself. "No one gives a damn how dirty it is." Dirt is friendly stuff. I leaned forward and baked my cheeks near the stove.

My conscience persisted. It kept telling me that I should do something for my keep. Ill-temperedly, I rose and left the room. If I had remained I would have swept the floor, and the bum in me sneered at such a waste of energy. I had cigarettes. As I stepped from the dark passage into bright sunshine, my spirits leaped suddenly. Spring had come.

The long sloping street was flooded with yellow

warmth; the paving stones stood out almost white and seemed as though they had been scrubbed; the paint on the wooden buildings seemed freshly laid, and the shop windows sparkled in the sunlight. The world was wonderfully clean and fresh. I wanted to feel clean with it, and I straightened my shoulders and, taking my hat off, ran my fingers through my hair until I felt the freshness sooth my scalp. It was good to be alive again.

I looked up and down the street and marveled at the change that had come to it. For months it had been as silent and drab as a deserted town; except for an occasional figure hurrying along close to the walls of the houses it had been empty. Now it bubbled with life. Men were lounging against the buildings or sauntering along the sidewalk. Some were without coats, and their shirts gave more color to the morning. The blue sky hung over the town like a blessing. A group of children ran and laughed, and their laughter was dainty music in the clear air; pipe smoke was blue, and the whole world was peaceful and unhurried. The sun must have felt proud of his power, for in the next few hours he poured warmth down on us, until doors were flung open and even the laziest tramp came to the doorways and the girls from the brothels came forth in bright frocks and were nice girls again.

"Hi, Scotty!" Mary's shriek came from the depths of the lodging-house.

"Hi, Scotty! Mary wants you," a man called to me from the doorway. I had been leaning against the wall a short distance away, and I made no response. She would want me to go up among the filthy beds and be choked by dust. I would not go; not on such a day.

"Hi, Scotty; Mary wants you."

I stepped clear of the wall and squared my shoulders. "Tell Mary to go to hell," I shouted, and walked away.

Some one laughed.

I went down the hill to the railroad, where I found two other young fellows sitting by the line. I was smoking, and they asked me for a cigarette. I told them I was smoking my last one. They waited until I gave them the stump, and then they took turns at smoking it. I suddenly thought this was a trick I would not have done a year ago, and I was angry. I took out my packet and gave them each a whole cigarette. The smug glow that I felt as they thanked me made me want to laugh at myself.

An old man came along, and we asked him when the next train was passing through.

"Dunno," he said. "You'll find it cold riding."

We three lay back in the comfort of the hot sun and smiled at the ancient's weakness.

A slow local freight appeared about an hour later and we boarded her. The train stopped at every siding along the line, and the guard was hostile. He kept us on the jump at every stop. We had a lot of fun dodging him. He left us alone after sunset, and the trip began to get monotonous and cold. It was irritating to wait at every stop while cars were detached or added; for after a winter's inactivity I was impatient for speed and movement.

After dark, the three of us stamped up and down the empty box-car and wished ourselves back in Hurley. It was bitter cold. One of the other chaps suggested a fire, and we were too desperately cold to care about the risk of setting the car alight.

We collected some old paper and straw from a heap of dunnage in the car and set our fire going on the wooden flooring. It flared up alarmingly, but we danced round it and shouted like crazy men as we felt its heat. We felt the train slow up a bit, but thinking she was climbing a grade we paid no attention until a trainman jumped in through the doorway we had left open to let the smoke escape.

I dodged as he grabbed at me, and leaped from the car. The train was going very slowly, and I rolled clear without injury. When I arose the caboose was passing where I stood, and ahead of it a shower of flaming

paper and sparks was being kicked out of the box-car. My two companions did not appear, and I guessed the trainman had got them.

I watched the train's rear light disappear round a bend, and then looked round to get my bearings. I could see nothing but trees; jack-pine, I guessed, for the night was solid black and nothing was distinct. I walked after the train, stumbling over the ties when I tried to run, and feeling very lonely with the night noises and the gloomy walls of the forests on each side of the line. I walked for almost an hour, until I came to a level crossing. Then I turned along a wide concrete highway, keeping myself warm by running twenty steps and walking twenty.

I kept going for hours, spurred by fear of the cold, which was now well below freezing. I had no idea where I was heading, but just wanted to beat off the cold night. There was a cruel threat in the sullen mass of sky and the shiny frost that set the tips of the trees and the points of the tiny stones in the concrete road glowing. I ran along the side of the road, panting and perspiring until I had to slow down from a pain in my side.

Several cars passed me, going at a great speed, their engines humming loud and even in the stillness and their headlights flooding the road and setting the sur-

face gleaming for a second. The night seemed twice as dark when they passed me. At first I did not try to stop one, for I knew American motorists are suspicious of night lifts, fearing hold-ups. When a grayness crept into the sky and treetops began to stand out distinct against the coming morning, I was so tired with running that I decided to try my luck.

I stood by the side of the highway and waved my arms above my head when the next car came along. To my delight the car slowed down and stopped. The driver lowered a window and peered into my face.

"What is it?" he demanded.

"Will you give me a lift?" I asked. "I'm all beat with running to keep warm."

"You poor devil!" he said. "Here, jump in."

I jumped in, and the driver set the car going. I examined him furtively and decided my luck was in. He was young, appeared to be around thirty and looked a decent sort. He glanced at me.

"Where are you going on a night like this?" he asked curiously.

His accent was unmistakable; I had met an Englishman. I made him up a good story and was careful to put a respectful note into my voice. Englishmen like that.

"I'm going to the Lakes to get a ship," I said. "I've

had a bad break this winter . . . sick and no work . . . and I'm making for Manitowoc." Manitowoc was the place where I had left the *Lynford E. Geer* the previous year, and the name came to my lips easily.

"I'm going through to Chicago," the Englishman said, "I'll take you pretty close to Manitowoc."

"Thank you, sir," I answered; "it is awfully decent of you." My English was respectful but carefully correct. He noticed it.

"Are you an Englishman?"

"Scotch, by birth," I explained, "but I have lived mostly in England."

"Really. . . . What are you doing in America?"

"Looking for freedom," I was mildly sarcastic.

As I had hoped, he laughed. Englishmen in America or the Colonies are either more than one hundred per cent. new country, or carry Piccadilly Circus round in their pockets. That is why it takes two generations of them to make sincere citizens of a new country. I had banked on my good Samaritan being a die-hard Englander. He was. We spent an enjoyable hour picking holes in the United States. Its laws, morals, scenery, and female beauty were compared with the Old Country's, and America got a terrific tearing to pieces.

My companion had been in America for ten years and was a fairly successful real-estate agent.

"Your boots are in a bad way," he remarked concernedly. I had kept my foot across my knee so long that I was getting a cramp waiting for him to notice the hole in the sole of my boot. Now, my object achieved, I put it down hurriedly and murmured that I would get a new pair by and by.

"I couldn't let an Englishman go round with boots like that," he said. "Englishmen always stand by each other, you know."

I smiled thankfully, but was startled when I saw it was a ten-dollar bill he had handed me. I blushed and really tried to get him to take it back.

"You'll need it," he said. "We're both English."

"Would you," I asked after a long silence, "have given an American hobo ten dollars?"

"Certainly not!" he answered emphatically.

"And yet you make your money from America."

I felt I was a fool for saying this, but, somehow, I had a feeling I had taken part in an unsportsmanlike transaction, and I was, as I always am when I am ashamed of myself, cynically humorous. The Englishman was getting annoyed.

"That is a funny way to treat a gift," he said shortly, and I was pleased to notice he spoke to me without the note of patronage that had been in his previous speeches.

"I don't mean to offend," I answered, "but it suddenly struck me that for a people who pride themselves on being good sportsmen, and who are good sportsmen in most things, we British seem to lose a lot of our best points when we come to any of the new countries."

"How do you make that out?" he demanded.

I held out the ten-dollar bill. "That, for instance: You gave me, a waster, ten dollars because I am a Britisher, and you would not give one dollar to a down-and-out American. . . . Yet you made what money you have in America. Does that not strike you as wrong?"

"Americans would do the same in England," he defended.

"I expect they would," I agreed, "and they consider themselves good sportsmen too. . . . But I see more than just a string end of loyalty to a fellow countryman in such actions. I see that you will never make an American citizen."

"And I don't want to," he retorted. "I am proud of my nationality."

"So am I," I said. "But if I were making my living and, by doing so, proving to myself that I had found my corner (for a man is only successful where he is at home), I would try hard to look on my new country much as I would look on a wife, and on my old country as I would look on a parent. You would not think much

of a man who lived with his wife and then critcized her to his mother, would you?"

"But you abused America," he reminded me.

I grinned. "I held my boot up for you to see as well. I am a bum, and I would do lots of things to dodge work."

He laughed, and I knew I had read his face well; he was a decent sort.

I amused him with yarns about hoboes and sides of American life he had not known. We stopped at a small town, where he showed himself a thorough democrat by marching into a restaurant and sitting with me over a meal. I liked him for doing that, for my dirty unshaved face and the greasy mackinaw coat I wore justified any one in wishing to avoid sitting with me. After the lunch, we drove along conversing on subjects I had not touched for months. He brought up our first subject again.

"I never looked on it that way," he confessed. "Now I see what you mean and I believe you are right."

"I think I am," I said. "If we are getting the privileges of citizenship from any country we should, while we are getting them, belong to that country. We can still be proud of our birth; though birth never made a weekly wage . . . except on a board of directors."

"There is one strong fault in first-generation Ameri-

cans," the Englishman commented during our talk. "Their patriotism is too rowdy. . . . It does not seem sincere."

"I don't think it is sincere," I answered. "There is too much lip-patriotism in the States. . . . It might build an army for war, for its cousin is hysteria . . . but it isn't the deep steady patriotism of real patriots. Any fool will die for a country. It takes a real sincerity to live for one."

I told him about a test that was made in Australia, and we agreed that the same results applied to America.

"The Australian Government made investigations to find out who made the best emigrants and why. This is what they discovered: Scotch and German people made the best pioneers because they would suffer any sort of hardship to have a piece of land they could call their own, and one generation of these and other Nordic races were completely Australian. Englishmen nowadays are not pioneers, in spite of their great record as colonists. They are easily discouraged by physical hardship, and they persist in taking English methods where they are unsuited. They are English to the second and third generations, because they insist on having their children taught at the 'most English' schools. The Irish and southern European are not pioneers at all. They group together in cities and, usually, build slums.

Irish and Italians in particular are Irish and Italian to the fifth and sixth generation . . . sometimes for all time."

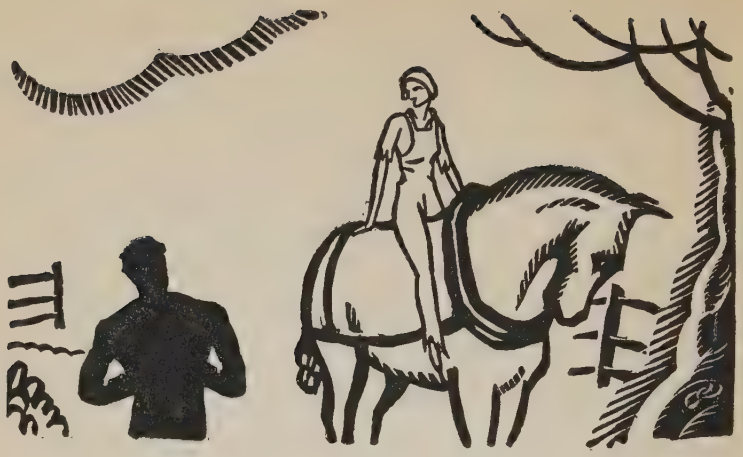
"That is interesting," my companion said, "and right, too. What amuses me is how good Americans encourage them."

I nodded, "Yes, put an Irish policeman on the stage and let him sing *Sweet Rosie O'Grady,* and he'll be chief of police before he finishes the last verse."

Having put America right about these questions, we agreed that every one should be one hundred per cent. whatever country supplies a living, and then we talked about London.

"Let them have their sky-scrapers," I thundered just before I left the Englishman. "What have Americans got that can compare with the Albert Memorial? Architecture . . ." I sneered, "they haven't the foggiest notion . . ."

Then I saw the grin on my companion's face.



CHAPTER XXI

A GIRL—AND A TRAGEDY ENTITLED "THE MAD HOBO"

THE Englishman dropped me at a small town forty miles abreast of Manitowoc; he to go to his home in Chicago, and I undecided whether to go to the Lakes or seek a warmer locality. I found a fifty-cent hotel in the town and solved my problem, temporarily, by sleeping soundly for twelve hours.

The following morning I decided what to do: I would go south. I had an idea Great Lakes shipping would still be ice-bound, and I dreaded the cold, insufficiently clad as I was. One of the Golden Rules of Hoboism is: "If your wardrobe does not suit the climate, find the climate that suits your wardrobe," and

the United States lies in the right place to make that a workable rule.

The memory of my cold ride out of Hurley kept me away from trains. I took the highway. My mood, supported by the Englishman's ten dollars, was one of unhurried independence. I would walk.

The day was crisply cold, but bright and ideal for walking. I strode along, singing songs and breaking into a dance when I was sure I had the road to myself.

On each side of the highway was a flat pastureland with fat, red-and-white cattle dotting the green. A pretty world, I thought; who could want a better? I looked up and grinned to the sun because I was bursting with good fellowship. I was solemnly executing a *pas seul* that was a mixture of all the dancing I had ever learned when I heard a laugh, a gurgling sound like water running over stones.

Blushing with shame, I looked round and saw a horse and rider standing under a tree at the entrance to a rough road coming from the fields. The rider was a girl clad in dungaree overalls, and with bobbed flaxen hair. I thought she made the cleanest picture I had ever seen.

The girl was not more than sixteen; her cheeks were flushed with the crisp air; her eyes were blue; her teeth were white; her hair was so soft that each little breeze

lifted it in strands that floated across her laughing face, so that she was kept busy pushing it back into place; and her dungarees had been washed until they were sky-blue and so soft that they clung to her slender figure like silk, and the trousers hems fluttered against the horse's side as the wind caught them. She wore canvas sneakers and sat on the heavy farm horse as though she had grown there. I placed her among the perfect pictures that I, like every one else, keep in my memory: a full-rigged ship crossing a moonglade, a tropic shore floating in a heat haze, a red fire lighting faces we love. . . . This girl was more than worthy to take a place among my secret memories of perfection.

I stood and stared at her, and she examined me with equal frankness. I was flushed with shame at being caught dancing on the lonely road, and my breath was labored from the exercise. Slowly an answering blush crept over the girl's cheeks and her eyes were suddenly shy. I raised my hat and turned away; hurrying along the highway as fast as I could move.

Years ago, I saw Pavlova dance. I never wish to see her again because she may do something that would spoil the memory I have of her. I did not want that farm girl to speak to me because I feared her voice might spoil the picture. As a child, I was told a fable about a man who was given a bag and told to hold it

open while a god poured gold into it. "Say when you have enough," the god instructed the man. The man was greedy. He watched the gold filling the bag and he would not say "Enough." The bag filled to the brim and still he would not tell the god to stop. The weight of the gold burst the seams of the bag asunder and when the gold touched the ground it melted into water. I have remembered that story, and I have kept the memory of the girl by knowing when to tell the gods "Enough."

I made up a story about the girl, for I knew who she was.

Years ago, when I was a very young sailor, I had a shipmate named Bill Haren. He taught me how to sew canvas and coax a splice into place, and he awakened the wanderer in me by recounting marvelous yarns of his adventures in every part of the world.

He had settled in America at one period in his life; married, and had a family. He had built himself a farm, and had prospered. His son grew up and married. Bill's wife died, and a granddaughter arrived. He loved this granddaughter, and he told me all about her. Then, Bill had a hankering for ships. He wanted to feel a deck under his feet before he died.

He turned the farm over to his son and set out for the coast with fifty pounds in his pocket. He could have

afforded to go passenger, he assured me each time he told the story, but he wanted to feel a rope running through his palm, so he shipped as A. B.

His granddaughter, then five years old, had cried, and tried to hold him back by hanging on to his coat. He promised he would be back soon; "and, I'm going to bring you an English saddle like the ladies in Rotten Row use," he tempted. The little girl had heard a lot about the ladies of Rotten Row, and being a woman, she fell. Bill was allowed to go on his promise to bring back the saddle.

He had been away from his granddaughter five years when I met him. He was saving up all his pays to buy an English saddle and collect fifty pounds; the sum he had brought away with him, and the sum he must have in his pocket when he returned, for Bill had real working man's pride in how he should appear before his own folks.

I used to wonder why he had taken so long to save this money, but when we hit our first port on the trip I discovered why. Bill disappeared for the time we lay alongside; returning on board on sailing day almost speechless and very sick after his debauch. I was young enough to be intolerant in these days, and I learned to look on Bill Haren as a joke and a liar. He had no farm, and no granddaughter . . . he just talked.

I wanted to apologize to Bill that morning as I walked away from the Wisconsin farm girl. He had a granddaughter, for I had just seen her. I wondered if he had brought her the English saddle, and was sorry I had not asked her. I did not think he had. Bill was fated to go over a ship's rail in a canvas suit, weighted with fire bars. I decided, then, that I would find a job somewhere, save enough money to buy an English saddle and take it to the girl. I could say Bill sent it. Then I smiled; Bill and I made a good pair. Maybe it was not Bill's granddaughter, anyhow.

I walked close on twenty miles that day, and in the evening I chopped wood for a farmer and got my supper. The farmer said I could sleep in his barn. The hay was snug and warm, and I lay listening to a horse clumping its feet below me, and the mice and rats making the dry hay rustle as they ran round trying to find a reason for my being in their home. The next morning I swept out the barn and did some chores for the farmwife. She gave me a good breakfast, and I set out again.

I had walked for more than two hours, judging by the sun, when I was hailed from the roadside by one of two men who were sitting over a small fire on which a can was boiling.

"Hullo, brother. . . . Want some java?"

The coffee smelled good, and I joined the men. The

one who had hailed me, a short sturdy fellow with a broken nose and a friendly grin, moved round to let me squat by the fire. His companion was a middle-aged man with a dirty gray beard, who sat looking at the fire and made no sign of having seen me.

"I've been hoping some one would happen along," the younger tramp said. He hooked a thumb toward his companion, "Steve gits my goat sometimes."

The other man did not pay any attention to this outspoken criticism. He never even lifted his head.

"He gets like that," the other continued, "jest sits and looks at something for hours without speaking; and me, I'm a talker."

I tapped my head significantly. The man nodded his head vigorously.

"Sure, clean nuts," he said without troubling to lower his voice. "All the bums know him . . . maybe you've heard of him. . . . He's called the Mad Hobo." Then he added loyally, "But a good guy, Steve is. I've traveled with him for near three months now, and I'm fond of the bloody old fool."

I noticed a rolled blanket lying on the ground, close to the old man. I was surprised to see this object, for a hobo with any kind of kit is looked upon with suspicion in the Middle West and Eastern States. The bundle-stiffs of California carry rolled blankets, but to have

such property elsewhere is to be suspected of being a man who would rather sleep out than bum a bed. Also, this blanket was rolled into a bundle about a foot in diameter and two feet long. It was more like an Australian sundowner's swag than part of an American hobo's outfit. However, I did not ask questions.

We three took sips at the coffee can. I passed it to the younger of the two men, and he passed it to his friend. The first time around, the Mad Hobo took a quick gulp out of the can, and then sat holding it on his knee, but made no sign of passing it to me. He was contemplating the fire and appeared to be asleep.

"Take it from him," the other man instructed me. "He don't know he's holding it."

I reached across and took the can from fingers that let it go without resistance and remained outspread as though they still held it. Suddenly the Mad Hobo lifted his head and looked round with an angry gleam in his eyes. His breath came in sharp gasping sounds, and he jumped to his feet. Lifting the rolled blanket, he placed it on end. Then he jumped back from it and put up his hands in a fighting attitude.

To my amazement, he commenced muttering angrily, and sparring round in a circle, always facing the blanket, at which he glared most ferociously. His lean hands shot in and out as he crouched like a boxer seek-

ing an opening in an opponent. Suddenly he stepped close to the blanket, hit it a blow that toppled it on its side, then, cursing triumphantly, he stood over the bundle with his hands on his hips. As I watched, his shoulders sagged, and he turned to the fire again. His eyes were, once more, dull, and he sat down docilely. His head dropped, and he was again as I had first seen him. I looked at the other man in amazement.

"What the . . . ?"

The tramp nodded and looked at his friend sadly. "Tough, ain't it? That's how it gits him. He thinks it's the guy what made him mad."

"You don't mean to say some one sent him mad?" I asked in horror.

Again the sad shaking of the other's head. "Yep. Twenty years ago Steve was as smart a bum as ever worked a hand-out. He knew 'em all."

"How did this happen?" I asked.

"Somewhere in Montana it was," the man informed me in a sad tone. "Steve was hanging round a small town when a young farmer came and asked him if he wanted a piece of work. He was going to tell this guy to go to hell when the farmer chips in and says his farm was forty miles west. There was no trains outa this town, and Steve wanted to go west. He sees a good chance of covering some ground and making something

for nothing, and he said he would go along if he got ten dollars advance to git himself some clothes and smoking. The farmer says all right, and Steve got himself a pair of boots and some smoking and a drink.

"The farmer was a wise guy, and he locked Steve in a hotel room that night and came for him when it was time to start out next morning. He could see Steve was a bum, but help was scarce in them days and he had to have some one. The two of them gits into the buggy, and away they go. When the trip was most ended, and it was good and dark, Steve lets out a yell.

" 'Hell, I've dropped my pipe!' he shouts. 'I'll be back in a minute.' Before the farmer could stop him, he jumped from the buggy and ran back along the road. When he got out of sight of the farmer, he dodges into the brush and scoots like hell.

"He slept in the brush that night, and the next day he gits on the highway. He passed two or three farms, but he did not try to work them; he was scared he would run against the farmer.

"He was walking along that afternoon when he sees a guy sitting by the roadside; just like you saw us when you come along. This guy was feeding, and he asked Steve if he wanted some. Steve was hungry and he says, 'Sure.'

"While he was eating, Steve noticed a spade and a

pick lying back of the other guy, and seeing them made him curious. The guy didn't look like he had been digging, and it was queer finding a man eating by the roadside and packing them tools. He starts asking questions in a roundabout way.

"The guy was close and wouldn't say much at first. Then, suddenly, he opened out and says, 'Look here, Buddy, I have been sizing you up, and I can see you are a decent guy who's down on his luck, and I'm going to let you in on something good.' Steve was all ears.

" 'I'm the son of Red Mulligan,' the guy said. 'Do you know who he was?'

"Steve shook his head.

" 'Well, he was the biggest hold-up man in these parts thirty years ago,' the guy told him. 'He cleaned up two bullion trains before a posse got him and strung him up.' The guy stopped and looked at Steve suspiciously. 'Say, will you play straight, fella?'

" 'Sure, Buddy,' Steve says, all hot and excited with this talk.

" 'Well . . . my . . . dad . . . hid . . . the . . . bullion . . . over . . . in . . . that . . . pasture,' the guy says slow and solemn. 'And he wrote and told my ma where to find it, before the posse got him.'

" 'The hell you say!' Steve gasped.

"The other guy nodded.

" 'I'm inviting you in. It's a two-man job to git it out. What say? It'll be fifty-fifty.'

" 'Bet your life!' Steve yelled, jumping up with excitement. 'Let's git started.'

"They climbed a fence to the pasture, and this guy, Mulligan, went to a tree and then walked in a straight line, counting his steps. Steve followed him with the spade and pick. Mulligan stopped and pointed down. 'It's there.'

"Steve gripped the pick and started in digging. The other guy said, 'We'll take turns. . . . You dig first, and I'll go and keep a lookout from that rise. We don't want anybody nosing in. Shout if you hit the stuff 'fore I come to give you a spell!'

"Steve hardly heard all this. He was digging like mad.

"He did not know how long Mulligan was away, and he did not care. He was gold-mad, and he paid no heed to time or weariness. He stopped digging like a crazy coon when the edge of the hole was higher than his head and the ground began to get soppy with water. The water went through his boots and woke him out of his madness. 'Where in hell was the money?' he thought. He leaned against the side of the hole to get his breath back, for he was panting and sweating like a horse from this, the first work he had done in his life.

A shadow fell across him, and he looked up. Standing on the edge of the hole, looking down on him, was Mulligan and the farmer Steve had put the trick over on the day before.

"The farmer grinned down at Steve. 'Hullo, bum,' he said. 'That water-finder knew his stuff all right. . . . You'll get wet if you don't jump out quick!'

"Steve paid no attention to him at first, but shouted to Mulligan. 'Say, there's water here. . . . Are you sure this is the right spot?'

"Mulligan laughed, 'Sure, bum. . . . The right spot to find water and make you earn the ten dollars you got outa my young brother yesterday.' "

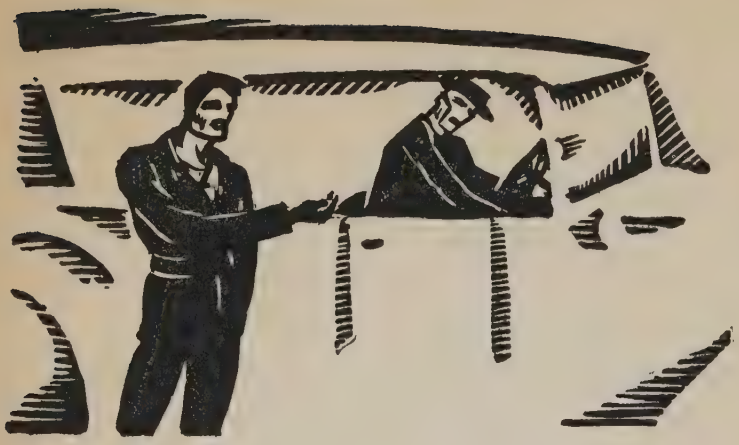
The narrator shook his head sadly. "Steve keeps thinking that blanket is Mulligan."

"But surely that did not send him mad?" I asked.

The other looked at me suspiciously. "Say, you are a proper bum, ain't you?" he demanded.

"I guess I am," I answered. "But . . ."

"But . . . hell!" he retorted. "Wouldn't having to do that make anybody mad?"



CHAPTER XXII

PROHIBITION AND HOT DOGS

THROUGHOUT all my several wanderings the special providence that is reputed to look after fools and drunk men has not neglected me. Without any conscious effort of will I have done the things I had hazily planned to do.

When I have been leaving England, bound on some wander, my friends asked the usual question, "How long will you be away this time?" I always answered with the first words that came to my tongue; stating some period, when, really, I had no idea how long I would be away. The curious thing is that I did, always, return home almost on the date I had said I would. In

my work I have discovered the same happening; for in spite of a natural gift of procrastination I am doing what I said I would, and in the years I had predicted. I am perhaps two persons, like that other shy and modest Scot, Sir James Barrie. If so, my particular other self is a very worthy young man, and I am glad I have him around to take care of me. Again, though I very much doubt this explanation, maybe, without knowing it, I am a strong silent man, with a will of steely determination. The special-providence belief is the best bet, I think.

The fact that I arrived in Manitowoc six weeks after I left the Englishman with whom I discussed patriotism, is merely proof of the attention I received from the fools' providence. You will remember I told the Englishman I was going to Manitowoc?

I covered the last thirty miles of my journey into this town with a gentleman who was some sort of inspector for the Prohibition League. Previous to securing the position, he had been a parson; but his interest was mostly in a gasoline filling station he had opened in his home town. He was very proud of his venture into commerce, and his method of introducing his success was subtle.

He asked me about my native country and listened impatiently while I waved the Union Jack in reply.

"But it is behind the times," he asserted, when I was finished. "This is the country for men with ideas. Men with ideas can make money here."

The gentleman had a long mournful face that never smiled, but his eyes gleamed with the light of an idealist.

"Take my case, for instance," he continued. "I had a few hundred dollars to spare. What did I do? Did I let it lay in the bank and pay me a small interest?" Triumphantly, "No! I bought a piece of waste ground and had it fitted as a filling station. Could I have done that in any other country?"

I had an idea that he could have, but I hate to destroy an illusion and I said, "No, you could not," in an impressed tone. However, I did not like the man, and I wanted to argue about prohibition with him. I wanted to argue with every one except dead-beats at this period of my life.

"What is your legitimate occupation? What are your duties for the Prohibition League?" I asked. The "legitimate occupation" phrase was what Americans call a dirty crack. He did not see it as such. His kind never do.

"I travel round keeping check on the local judges and sheriffs," he told me.

"To see they keep in line?"

"To see they enforce the country's laws."

"What happens if they don't?"

"They get out."

"As easy as that?"

"Yes," he answered, and his voice was filled with righteous pride. "The Prohibition League of the United States is the richest and most powerful organization in the world."

"Then it has all the virtues," I commented, liking this ex-parson, garage owner, prohibition spy and bigot less every minute. "Do you honestly believe in prohibition?" I asked.

"Of course I do. It is the finest thing that has ever happened to this country. It has saved thousands of poor souls from sin."

"Is it true that it was hurried through Congress while your men were at the War?"

"Certainly not! It was passed through by the representatives who had been put into Congress by the whole nation before the men went to the War."

"One to you," I thought, wishing I knew enough about American politics to find the hole in his defense. I attacked him from an angle I did know.

"Do you know that it has caused a lot of damage among your young people; particularly among your most valuable young people? . . . College boys and girls look on drinking as a point of honor, and no suit

of clothes is complete without a hip-flask. Is that saving souls?"

"We do not admit that is true," he answered. "And if it is, unfortunately young people will always play with dangerous toys. They will grow away from it in time; something else will become fashionable, and the next generation will not want strong drinks."

"If bootleg drinking is a fashion, it is the only such fashion that ever lasted ten years. That is not a convincing argument." I said, "Also, I had thought that any reform that costs one human life more than the existing system is not a reform at all; and, to me, it seems brutal to sacrifice one generation for the doubtful good of the next. Prohibition will never be a success until it is world wide. As long as ships and aeroplanes can take people to and from the countries where drink is to be had no one country can be dry."

"We will stop them drinking in the United States," he asserted grimly.

"In Scotland," I informed him, "parents are too prudish to allow their daughters to bring their young men friends home for an evening's dancing and front-parlor courting unless the young people are on the eve of marrying. They refuse to admit that a girl does not want to marry every young fellow she flirts with . . . so the couples go out into the fields. That is why Scotland has

more illegitimate births than most places. A little parable that can be applied to prohibition in America. You are bucking something more than the physical action of raising an elbow when you try to make people stop doing something the rest of the world is doing without hindrance. . . . You are throwing down a dare."

"We recognize all our problems," my companion declared. "The United States is leading the way in a glorious campaign that is another Crusade. We will make all the world dry in time."

There is a magnificent American word, "Blah," but I refrained from using it.

"Then why do you not stop this traffic in dangerous drinks?" I demanded.

"It is being stopped," he claimed. "We have made great progress."

"Have you done anything to stop the sale of that horrible temptation, canned heat?"

"Canned heat?" he asked. "What is that?"

"Do you mean to tell me that you, a member of the Prohibition League, do not know what canned heat is?"

"I do not."

What was the use of continuing? A soldier of another Crusade who claims ignorance of the existence of his cause's most deadly enemy is either a liar or a fool. I sat back in my seat.

Soon, spruce bungalows began to line each side of the road, and we passed a trolley car. I could see we were almost into Manitowoc, and I wanted to get away from this man before I did something for the good of humanity. My fingers were itching.

"May I get out here?" I requested.

I don't think he liked me either, for he pulled the car to a stop without delay. I paused on the step.

"Are you really out to help humanity?" I asked.

"Of course I am," he answered, watching me suspiciously.

"Then how about giving me fifty cents to buy a meal?" I asked.

He glared at me and let in his clutch. That is the worst of humanity's benefactors; they want to benefit all humanity, and being wholesale, they hate to retail their philanthropy. I walked to the "jungle" near the riverside, wishing I had been a crowd instead of just one poor soul. But, then, I suspect the ex-parson would have given us good advice. A soiled-looking hobo gave me a share of his coffee and a hard bun when I appealed to him.

That afternoon I lay under a tree and watched the river flowing round a bend to Lake Michigan; if I had taken the trouble to rise to my feet I would have seen the calm waters of the Lake over the low-lying land op-

posite where I was. The day was cool, but bright with hard sunlight. The trees were already covered with half-formed leaves of delicate green. The branches, visible through the spring garment, were like dark veins. A tree in spring is the symbol of youth. I wondered, as I lay watching them, why some college had not thought about that, and used a leafing tree for a crest.

The land rises steeply from the town side of Manitowoc's river, and the green slopes make a pretty background for the flowing water. On the opposite side of the river there is a ship-repairing yard on a stretch of flat land, and this morning there was a Lakes freighter in the floating dock. Men were working on her, and the clanging of hammers against steel, and the staccato rattle of riveting machines came to me across the water. The red bottom paint of the freighter's hull was brilliant as the sun struck it.

On the town side of the river there was a row of vessels moored under the high steep bank. The ugliest ships afloat; with their long bare hatch-space that makes cargo handling speedier on the Great Lakes than it is anywhere else, but which would mean disaster in any bad weather other than the short, if vicious, seas of a Lakes storm. The Texas and bridge huddled up in the stumpy bows, and another deck-house squeezed as

far aft as possible: far from romantic or graceful ship's architecture, but eminently common sense. The ugly ducklings of all waters, these Great Lakes freighters, but inside, as I knew, pure swan.

It is a true indication of my development at that time when none of these familiar sights aroused a desire to find a berth on board one of the freighters. I watched with idle curiosity, but without any wish to go closer than I was to the vessels. I had passed the stage when my professional pride would have writhed at the awkward handling of a painting stage I could see being slung over the side of the freighter nearest to where I lay. I was lazily amused.

Two deep-water sailors would have had the job finished and be sitting smoking in the obscurity of the bows sheer in the time it was taking half a dozen Lakers to get the long plank straight against the ship's side. I did raise myself on my elbow when I saw a man commence to slide awkwardly down one of the stage-ropes. He was obviously nervous, for he kept stopping, and hanging on like a monkey to a stick while he peered down at the stage. He hung half-way down the rope and tried to reach the plank by stretching his foot out. The stage swayed away as soon as he touched it, and the man's leg drew back and twisted round the rope at a speed that told of his fear. He had not the experience

to see that if he slid down the rope he must reach the plank safely, and the water was making him nervous. He dangled for a time, his awkward movements making the stage sway backward and forward, until, I suspect, he thought it was possessed of the devil, and meant to hurl him into the river. He was hauled back on board and the other men, who had been lined along the rail shouting advice to their unskilful shipmate, disappeared. They returned in a short time with a long ladder, which was lowered over the ship's side and made fast. Another man climbed down this ladder and managed to get seated on the stage, but I could see by the way he kept a firm grip on the supporting ropes that he was not very sure about his safety. Had I seen such an unsailorlike performance twelve months before I would have wanted to go and show them how it should be done. But I lay back and forgot about it. It had been a fleeting amusement, but nothing remained long in my mind in those days. What did I care how ships were painted? I only wanted to eat when I could, lie around when I was lazy, and chase over the face of a continent when I was restless. When a sailor is dead to professional pride, he is indeed dead.

My peace was disturbed by a clamor of voices in the jungle, and I turned in time to see the dozen or so hoboes who had been lounging round the fire running

after a man who kept turning every few yards to shout to them. They appeared to be excited, and I rose and followed them.

In a long string of shambling figures, we ran along the road leading to the docks, and finally turned down to the river front. The leading man stopped and pointed to the water. I wondered if some one was drowning.

As I reached the spot where they were, half of the men were jumping into a boat that was made fast to the quay. The boat's owner had removed the oars, but two hoboes found pieces of planking and paddled the craft toward the middle of the river.

"Look . . . there they are!" a man beside me shouted excitedly. He pointed to the water, and I followed his finger with my eyes, expecting to see two men struggling in the river. I could see nothing but the stream.

"Hell . . . wisht we could go out and git some," the man beside me said.

"How about this thing?" another man cried. He pointed to where a small, dockyard, workers' pontoon was moored farther along the quay. Three men rushed toward it, and the awkward craft heeled over alarmingly as they leaped on board. They clung together until it steadied, then one of them who appeared to know such craft took the oar that lay on it and sculled after the rowing boat.

The two craft reached the center of the river, and the men on board them reached over and started lifting something from the water. Whatever they were lifting was very small, for I could see nothing but their hands coming from the water. Apparently, there were plenty of the objects, for the men were bent to their task for a considerable time. Then I noticed the crew of a freighter close to which all this was being enacted were grouped along the after rail of their vessel, laughing and shouting to the hoboes.

"Attaboy . . . watch he don't bite!"

"Sic 'em, hobo!"

Their merriment increased my curiosity, and I was further annoyed to think any rotten sailor was laughing at a hobo.

The men on the pontoon were risking a ducking by the way in which they were lying on the flat craft, attempting to claim their share of the mysterious spoil. Each time the pontoon heeled over and the men on it rolled back to escape a wetting, the seamen on the freighter shouted their amusement. "Smart Alecks," I thought, "they could do a hell of a lot better . . . maybe." Sailors were not much good to me in those days. Still, I was very curious.

"Say, what's it all about, Buddy?" I asked one of the few remaining hoboes on shore.

He grinned.

"Slim Mike went on board that freighter and asked the cook for a hand-out. The cook told him to go to hell, and showed Slim a bucketful of hot dogs he had. 'Them's over,' he said. 'But afore I'd give 'em to any dirty bum, I'd ditch 'em,' and then he tossed the bucketful of hot dogs over the side afore Slim's eyes. Slim came runnin' and tolt the boys. . . . That's Slim in the boat out there."

It says much for my development when I did not laugh then, but watched the men in the boat with tense eyes, looking away now and then to glare angrily at the roaring seamen.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE ENDLESS TRAIL

TOWARD the middle of the following June I rode from Portland, Oregon, to Tacoma with a lady. It was the first time in nearly twelve months that any one had stopped to offer me a lift, and this woman was the only "decent" person I had spoken to for months. Housewives don't count, they are meals. If a man had offered the lift I would have refused, for I had a contempt for all respectable people. I fancied myself an individualist. Since then, I have discovered that a corpse is an individualist. I climbed into the two-seater, my thoughts a mixture of amusement and a faint stirring of my old sensation of adventure. I felt awkward.

The lady wore a light summer frock with a flower pattern and she appeared to be about thirty-five, but with the well-cared for, poised beauty that never ages. When she spoke I knew she was a southerner.

"Have you come far?" she asked.

"I was making for the railroad yard," I said. "But I guess I can ride just as well this way."

A little smile of amusement puckered the corners of her lips, and my resentment increased. I would have liked to tell her that I did not require her help to get where I wanted to go, which happened to be nowhere in particular.

"Are you looking for work?" she inquired.

"No . . . I'm just wandering round . . . a bum." I said this with unnecessary emphasis.

"That sounds fascinating, but useless," she remarked.

"It suits me."

She led the conversation on to hoboes, their characters, their morals, and how they existed. I loosened my tongue and told her how I had found a man in a locked box-car, stinking after being there for a month. He had forgotten to put a pebble in the door groove and a shunter must have closed the door while the poor devil was asleep. I told her how hoboes never thought of women, nor talked about them, because self-preservation keeps them busy. I described O'Hara, Sam the

Poet, Mary, a nigger who took an epileptic fit and fell between two cars, and a whole lot more—all of it true.

I liked the way she listened. There was not an "Oh" all the time I spoke, although I tried to scunner her.

"I can not understand why you should want to lead such a useless life," she said when I had finished talking. "Isn't there something you want to do—something useful?"

"I used to want to write . . . but that isn't useful."

I talked about myself then; all the speech I had saved up in twelve months was poured into my listener's patient ears.

"You sound as though you had a grudge," she commented. "But you should have stuck it. . . . If you work hard enough you get there."

She smiled in a friendly manner.

"I'll tell you something about myself now. I was married at sixteen, and three months after I left my parents' home I discovered my husband was a crook. He is in the penitentiary at the present time.

"I tried to make him go straight, but he would not listen to me. I left him.

"I could not go back home and face my folks, so I went to San Francisco and took a position in a store. I had a bent toward sketching, and I took lessons. When I was twenty-two I started on my own as an interior

decorator, and now I specialize in a high-grade line of decorating. I am the second biggest firm in this particular branch in the United States. . . . How is that for beating a tough break?"

"You had good-looks," I retorted.

She jammed on the brakes and reached in front of me. The door of the car swung open.

"Get out," she said. "I might have expected that."

I had to walk the last five miles into Tacoma, and my thoughts were not pleasant.

I had to chop a stack of wood for my meal that afternoon, and I felt that the whole world was down on me. When I saw a policeman eying me suspiciously as I stopped to look in a window on Tacoma's main street, I took his glance as another proof of the world's antagonism. Every one was out to beat me down.

I wandered round the town, looking into restaurants where people sat in front of white linen and clean silver. I drifted along the water-front and stood looking at a Blue Funnel cargo steamer for hours. I remembered seeing her in Birkenhead Docks when I was second mate on a coasting scuffler. I went on board to find out if there was a chance of shipping. The crew were Chinamen; which was another proof that a good man could not get a break anywhere. I cursed shipowners, editors, policemen and successful business women.

I crossed to the town again and wandered down the main street. It was getting dark, and the lighted windows made me feel lonesome. Another policeman stopped to look after me, and then followed me.

"Say, what are you doing around here?" he demanded.

"Aw, leave me alone," I said.

"You better beat it out of this town, or I'll run you in," he threatened. "We don't want any bums around here."

He watched me until I turned across a foot-bridge over the railway.

I went down to the line and walked toward where I guessed the freight yard would be. I should have circled the town and picked up a train well clear of the yard. Not knowing this, I walked on, until a man shouted to me. I was so scared by this time that I turned and ran back toward the foot-bridge.

When I reached the main street again, my nerves were jumpy, and I kept in the shadows. I was afraid the police would get me; that would have meant being deported. I hurried clear of the principal streets and turned down a road that was lined with seasoning timber in stacks. When I saw space under a wooden sidewalk, I crept in and lay down on the sloping bank under the pavement.

Several people walked past, over my head, and after a bit, I fell asleep.

"Hi, outa that! . . . Come on, hustle!"

I sat up and bumped my head on the wooden sidewalk. A policeman had his torch on me, and he was smacking the soles of my feet with his night-stick.

I wriggled into a corner of the space where I was, but the policeman reached in and hauled me out by the coat. He dragged me upright and marched me to the streets. Then he kicked me.

"If I see you around this town any more, you're for it," he shouted as I ran along the street.

I climbed up the main street and turned to the right over a bridge. A highway sloped down between lumber mills, and then ran level over some swamps where there were rows of shanties built on piles. It was daylight when I reached the top of a high hill and looked down over the trees at Tacoma.

I sat on a tree stump and steeped myself in self-pity.

I was the hard-done-to unfortunate, everybody was trying to rub my face in the mud; editors, train guards, policemen. . . . I cursed them all with every word I had collected in my life. If realistic art were truly realism, that expression of hatred would rank as a masterpiece.

Mostly I thought of the kick I had suffered. I felt the

policeman's toe a hundred times that morning, and each time my cheeks flushed and I was hot with shame.

I had been kicked. Remembering the spoken contempt that had been flung at me during my months' bumming, I knew I should not put too much importance on a kick. But I did. O'Hara's words came back while I sat on the hill overlooking Tacoma: "It will take a kick in the pants to keep you sensible." I was beginning to get his point, and I was not flattered. The Australian had recognized something ratlike in my mentality, and a rat always turns when it is attacked. I chose to interpret O'Hara in this way, and I began to realize what I had become.

I walked for miles along the top of the hills, following a highway lined with burned-out forest land. I stopped and gorged myself with raspberries in a deserted fruit orchard, and washed at a well behind the empty house.

The whole world was mine that morning. I met no one in ten miles, and at last the highway became monotonous. A narrow road, running down to the left and shady with overhanging trees, aroused my interest, and I turned down it.

The road wound for about two miles, and ended at the sea. I had found my way to the shores of Puget Sound.

Puget Sound! The name set my imagination working. Puget Sound had seemed the land of adventure to me since I first read the name. It was gold strikes, and falling pine trees, redskins, and intrepid explorers. And here before me was Puget Sound.

I walked on to a wide beach, wetting my feet in the sodden sands. The beach was yellow, the water was blue, and thick green foliage clustered right to the beach and hung over it in shady nooks. I forgot to be bitter, and held my arms out to breathe in the smell of kelp. Puget Sound, Land of Adventure . . . and I became an adventurer.

Looking down, I saw my patched trousers and my worn boots. I stripped off my old hat and stood looking at it. I laughed, and pretended these were the trail-worn garments of the first white man to see Puget Sound. There was no Tacoma, no policeman, no civilized world to hate.

I walked along the sands until I came to a small colony of bungalows. The sight of them annoyed me, but I turned their presence into practical use. I left the colony carrying enough food for three days.

After walking four or five miles along the sands, I found a stream running from the thick timber, and I decided to make a camp.

With branches and ferns I built a sleeping shelter,

weaving a mattress of ferns and long weeds. I took time over the task, for I enjoyed every moment I worked. When the shelter was finished it was rain-proof and wind-proof.

I collected driftwood and built a fire. My supper consisted of coffee and bread. I ate it sitting at the entrance to my shelter, a lawn of yellow sand at my feet, and an estate of smooth blue beyond. Over my head the trees bowed down and gave me additional security. I felt peace . . . absolute peace. It was like coming to a home.

For three days I remained in this paradise, commencing the morning with a long swim, and carrying rocks for an hour after my swim. I had decided to go to Canada and get a job, and I was getting my muscles right.

No more bumming, no more crazy ideas of being a writer; I was a working man and I would remain one. Maybe I would take a master's ticket some day and command a ship. I did not think too much about that dizzy height, I wanted to keep this clean feeling I had. If my intentions wavered, I had only to remember the policeman's kick.

In the afternoons I wandered about the forest or lay in the sun. In the evenings I built the fire to a happy flame and sat steeping myself in the stillness of the

night. I was humble, but purged of all uncleanliness. Every tissue was alive and ready to push the world over on the morning I climbed up a forest path and arrived on the main highway.

I walked to Seattle, and there picked up a freight train that carried me through magnificent forest land where mountains towered all around.

The train stopped at the Canadian border, and I walked boldly through a village and past the American customs men. On one side of the village street there was a Union Jack, and on the other the Stars and Stripes. I almost raised my hat to the British Flag, and a load lifted from my heart when I passed it. Half a mile up the road I stopped and rubbed the sole of my boot into the soil.

"That's British," I said, and I discovered that I was proud of my nationality.

An insurance representative gave me a lift into the handsome city of New Westminster, and from there I walked to Vancouver.

I slept in the lee of a shed on the water-front that night, and the next morning I went in search of a ship, homeward bound. My good resolutions still held firmly.

I stopped a man and asked him where the shipping office was.

"Maybe you know of an English ship that needs hands," I added.

"There's a limey boat down at that quay," he pointed. "You could try there."

I left him and hurried to the ship he had pointed out. I was in a fever of impatience to reach England.

The ship appeared to be a coaster, and I thought the man must have been fooling me. However, as the name under her quarter was *Baychimo London,* I decided to try my luck.

I climbed over a deck littered with drums of oil and cases. She seemed a small craft to be carrying a deck cargo all the way to England, but I would have shipped on a two-oared skiff at that moment.

I found the mate putting a lashing round some cut timber on the fore-deck. He looked me over and shook his head.

"We need a man . . . but you don't look like a sailor."

That hurt, but I dived deep into my coat and produced my one remaining treasure—my Papers.

The mate read, and examined me again.

"Are they your own?"

"Of course, sir. . . . I've had a bad break."

"All right. . . . I'll give you the berth. . . . You know where we are going, don't you?"

I shook my head. "Home . . . isn't it?"

He shook his head. "No. . . . We're going to the Western Arctic. . . . This is a Hudson's Bay Company trader."

Hudson's Bay Company trader! Western Arctic! Who would ship to England when adventure came that easy?

When the *Baychimo* steamed northward through the Inside Passage, the following day, I was lashing down her deck cargo. I *did* reach England, many months later.

(Now I suddenly remember that although I feel myself to be an authority on the United States, I have to confess I have never eaten pumpkin pie.)

THE END

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